"Perec me Pinxit"

Paintings and painterly practice in Georges Perec from Le Condottiere to La Vie Mode d'emploi

Vol. I of II

A Thesis submitted to
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DECLARATION

No portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other institution.

PRELIMINARY NOTE

My article, "Perec's Painterly Eye" (The Review of Contemporary Fiction, 1993), deals in summary with some of the points discussed in this thesis and in particular on pages 52, 91-92, 118, 120-121, 171, 208, 214 below.

This thesis is partly based on unpublished material held in the "Fonds Perec" in Paris and in the Georges Perec Study Centre at the University of Manchester. Quotations from unpublished material in this thesis are made with the permission of Madame Ela Bienenfeld. They may not be reproduced in any medium without prior authorisation from the Estate of Georges Perec.

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Conventions and abbreviations used in this thesis

Quotations from and references to Perec's published works are attributed by means of title abbreviations as listed below. Full publication details will be found in the Bibliography in Vol. II.

53J	53 jours. POL, 1889.
Atlas	(Collective) Atlas de littérature potentielle. Gallimard, 1981.
BO	La Boutique Obscure. Denoël, 1973.
D	La Disparition. Denoël, 1969
Eses	Espèces d'espaces. Galilée, 1974.
inf	Infra-ordinaire. Seuil, 1989.
Jms	Je me souviens. Hachette, 1978.
Jsn	Je suis né. Seuil, 1990.
LC	Les Choses. Une Histoire des années 60. Julliard, 1965.
L.G.	L.G. Une aventure des années soixante. Seuil, 1992.
P/C	Penser/Classer. Hachette, 1985.
PTG	Petit Traité invitant à la découverte de l'art subtil du Go. C. Bourgois, 1969.
REI	Récits d'Ellis Island. Histoires d'errance et d'espoir. Hachette/Le Sorbier, 1981.
Rev	Les Revenentes. Julliard, 1972.
UCDA	Un Cabinet d'amateur. Histoire d'un tableau. Balland, 1979.
UHQD	Un homme qui dort. Denoël, 1967.
VCMA	Les Verts Champs de moutarde de l'Afghanistan. Translation of Harry Mathews, Tlooth. Denoël, 1974.
Vme	La Vie mode d'emploi. Hachette, 1978.
Wse	W ou le souvenir d'enfance. Denoël, 1975

Quotations from interviews with Georges Perec are attributed by means of the abbreviations listed below. Full details are given in the Bibliography in Vol. II.

Albi	"A propos de la description". Debate, 1981.
AH 1978	Interview with Alain Hervé.
BM 1965	Interview with Bruno Marcenac and Marcel Benabou.
BN 1977	Interview with Bernard Noel.
CB 1977	Interview with Claude Bonnefoy.
EP 1983	Interview with Ewa Pawlikowska
FV 1979	Interview with Frank Venaille.
GC 1978	Interview with Gilles Costaz.
GS 1983	Interview with Gabriel Simony.
JB 1978	Interview with Jacques Brochier
JC 1978	Interview with Jacques Chancel
JMS1979	Interview with Jean-Marie Le Sidanier
JP 1978	Interview with Jacqueline Piatier.
JR 1979	Interview with Jean Royer.
KM 1981	Interview with Kaye Mortley.
OB 1981	Interview vith Claudette Oriol Boyer.

PB 1971	Interview with Pierre Bourgeade.
PC 1978	Interview with P. Carles and F. Marmande.
PL 1978	Interview with Pierre Lartigue.
Warwick	"Pouvoirs et limites du romancier français contemporain". Lecture, 1967

The following abbreviations are used for other works :

Arc	Georges Perec, L'Arc, n° 76 (1979).
CGP1	Cahiers Georges Perec I. POL, 1985.
CGP2	Cahiers Georges Perec 2, Textuel 34/44, 21 (1988). (Université de Paris-VII)
CGP5	Cahiers Georges Perec 5 (Les Poèmes hétérogrammatiques). Editions du Limon, 1992.
FP	"Fonds Perec", the archives of Perec's papers deposited at the Arsenal Library, Paris.
GPLW	David Bellos, Georges Perec, A Life in Words. London: Collins Harvill, 1993.
L	Georges Perec, Life A User's Manual. Translated by David Bellos. London: Collins Harvill, 1987.
PAP	Mireille Ribière (ed.), Parcours Perec. Actes ducolloque de Londres. Lyon : Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1990.

Notes are gathered in Vol. 2, pp. 341-351. Full bibliographical references are given in the Bibliography.

An asterisk attached to a real or fictional name indicates that it figures in La Vie mode d'emploi.

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS submitted by Patrizia Molteni

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"Perec me Pinxit". Paintings and painterly practice in Georges Perec from Le Condottiere to La Vie mode d'emploi.

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The aim of this study is to define both the visual quality of Perec's writing and the use of painterly concepts and techniques. This study has two focuses: Le Condottiere, an early unpublished novel, and La Vie mode d'emploi (Vme), written towards the end of Perec's writing career. What emerges from the analysis of these two texts is the fundamental unity and coherence of Perec's use of painting. For this reason a large section of this thesis is devoted to the work of some of Perec's "artistic sources": Paul Klee, Antonello da Messina, Renaissance artists, Japanese scrolls. Klee provides material for understanding Perec's concept of realism which combined personal experience, formal research and a degree of falsification. This is applied to Le Condottiere, where Perec first put into practice his reflections on the process of artistic creation. Amongst the artists included in the Paintings List of Vme (mostly from the Renaissance period), are to be found examples of portraits, still lifes and landscapes that bear substantial similarities to Perec's treatment of character, setting and objects. Similarly, the use of writing by some of these artists (inscriptions, titles) echoes Perec's insertion of paintings in his novels. A comparative study of these aspects helps explain Perec's approach to constraint and reveals an affinity in method and scope which explains the relevance of these artists both to Vme and to Perec's writing.

The starting point of the present work is Perec's first definition of Vme as "la description d'un tableau", namely Steinberg's "The Art of Living". This constitutes, in this context, the first example of Perec's narrative description of paintings. The word tableau also denotes both the painted canvas and the "table" of elements on which the novel is built. In this sense Vme may be regarded as the most complex example of Perecquian ekphrasis and one that is, like many of Perec's texts, deliberately constructed on different levels of meaning.

The second part of this thesis defines the role of ekphrasis and description in Vme and analyses the figure of the fictional artist in relation to previous uses of this device (Balzac, Zola, Diderot). Although artists and art works are used, as by his predecessors, to serve as metatextual references to the author, what most clearly emerges from this study is that Perec's insertion of artists and art works is not only surface-deep. In the light of some of the author's "artistic sources" (Renaissance art, Japanese scrolls, trompe-l'oeil, anamorphosis) it is in fact possible to discover the essence of Perec's painterly writing which goes far beyond the simple use of artists and art works. The painterly quality of his oeuvre is to be found in the visual aspect of the text and in the use of more specifically painterly techniques: fragmentation and composition; perspective; the mechanisms of illusion; and the notions of space and time.

This thesis has developed from the literal application of Perec's injunction "Look with all your eyes, look!". Looking at painting and painterly practices as visual entities rather than mere text-generating devices permits a fuller appreciation of an often mentioned but never previously explained aspect of Perec's writing.

Introduction

Definition of the field

Perec's first published words were "l'oeil d'abord ..." (LC, p. 9). The first eye in Perec's career as a published author is an expression of the "aesthetic of vision" which was to remain a typical trait of his literary enterprise. It represents the author's eye, first of all, decorating with extraordinary care his two main characters' apartment; it also represents the reader's eye, which is taken around the couple's ideal home in a visually perceptible panoramic movement. It also stands, more generally, for the eye as an optical instrument and belongs to the broader issue of "learning how to look" - just as the opening chapter of UHQD explores the visions of a man with his eyes shut as he is about to fall asleep, so the opening chapter of LC questions the way in which things are perceived by the receptive eye. This first chapter thus announces with significant self-awareness on the author's part, that his writing will engage in new ways with the significance and the texture of what can be seen.

The visual domain is of equal importance in Perec's masterpiece, Vme. All three main characters are artists of a sort: Valène is a professional artist, Bartlebooth is an amateur who devotes his life to watercolour, Winckler is a puzzlemaker. The novel itself takes the narrative form of a segmented description of a painting (a painting that is only potential, since Valène hardly begins to fill in his grid). It does so by describing, mostly at the start of each chapter, what can be seen in the room that is being "framed", including a large number of paintings and iconic objects.

For these reasons it is almost a platitude of current criticism to describe Perec as a "painterly writer". The broad aim of this thesis is to explore the real foundations of Perec's painterly approach and to make sense of the role of the visual in his main work.

Survey of previous approaches

The subject is not entirely unexplored in academic criticism. Attention has been paid to Perec's use of the eye (Pouilloux 1989, Magné 1989a, Chauvin 1990), as well as to pictorial themes such as trompe l'oeil (Roche 1983, Pouilloux 1989), forgery (Roche 1983, Pouilloux 1991, Chauvin 1990) and miniature (Chauvin 1990) and to Perec's alleged iconoclasm (Schwartz 1987). However, even if these articles were to be taken all together, nothing like a coherent picture would yet emerge.

Amongst these articles two can be treated as pioneering though obviously not yet definitive studies of the function of painting. Bernard Magné's "Lavis mode d'emploi" (1985) and "Peinturécriture" (1989) have been cited frequently as if they were the two reference essays on the subject. In the first article, Magné gives a cursory count of the paintings in Vme and proceeds to set the rules both for the insertion of fragments from a list of ten paintings (see Chapter 3 below for a fuller explanation) and for the role of paintings in the novel. In the second article, the author gives a broader list of the occurrences of art works and painterly techniques in Perec's oeuvre and offers a partial explanation of their role. Broadly speaking, Magné sees paintings and painterly techniques as "constraint integrators", as "text generators" and as metatextual self-references to Perec's own writing. In short his standpoint is to regard painting primarily as a device for text production and as yet another metaphor for the act of writing, that is to say as Perec's particular variant of self-referential mise en abyme. Magné does, of course, mention other possible functions: painting may serve to flatten the diversity of representational levels, or to introduce narration, or to transform meaning. These points will be discussed separately as they arise in the relevant sections of this thesis.

The bulk of published scholariship deals primarily with the late, short and certainly minor novelette, UCDA, the subtitle of which - "Histoire d'un tableau" - has earned the book the reputation of Perec's "painterly novel". Although the ostensible subject matter of UCDA is indeed painting, (it is the story of a Gallery Picture depicting the collection of a wealthy art lover), and despite the fact that, here as elsewhere, Perec

shows an impressive erudition in Art History and in the genre of Kunstkammer, the text itself is based on more specifically linguistic (and multilingual) manipulations which do not apply solely to painting. In fact, one could imagine a similar novel evolving around a collection of objects (as in James Sherwood's story in Vme, Ch. XXII), or around a collection of books (Madame Célestine Durand-Taillefer, alias Madame Trévins (Vme, Ch. LXXXIX), could have provided the material for this kind of literary forgery). Whatever reasons Perec may have had for choosing to represent a collection of paintings, the choice may be seen as an indication of the place that art occupies in his writing. Yet the extreme irony of this short text should perhaps be read as a warning against painterly or literary speculations. When the Gallery Picture was first shown in Pittsburgh, viewers and critics crowded around the painting and examined with manic obsession the "minute" differences between Kürz's smaller and smaller reproductions without noticing that they were not at all reproductions but, as Pouilloux pointed out, completely different paintings (Pouilloux 1991). If painting is to be taken as a metaphor for writing, it is tempting to see in the crowd of viewers the sort of reader who, by concentrating mainly on the intertextual variations between UCDA and Vme, misses the whole point of the book. Indeed, one unnamed character in UCDA is so seized by his frustration as a viewer that he throws a bottle of ink at Kürz's Gallery Portrait and obscures it for ever (UCDA, 99) - as if to warn the obssessive textual scholar that he or she may be doing the same thing to Perec's text. This thesis cannot avoid all the traps that Perec laid on the path of every reader, but its starting point is, I believe, potentially far less misleading than the self-confirming pursuit of self-reference which characterizes most French-language Perec scholarship to date. Painting in UCDA is self-evidently canvas-deep; other parts of Perec's oeuvre, and most of all Vme, integrate artists, art works and painterly techniques in far more fundamental and subtle ways.

It has to be realised from the start that Perec's command of Art History was extensive and probably exceeds the collective erudition of those who write on Perec and painting. Magné in particular is concerned not with painting as painting, but only as a textual generating device.

The scope of this thesis

This study has two main focuses: Vme and an early novel, Le Condottiere, only recently re-discovered, whose subject is precisely the painting in the Louvre known as "Le Condottiere". The discovery of this text helped to establish links between the early stages of Perec's career as a writer, where painting seems to have played an important but fragmentary role, and his later works. It is therefore an essential work in the study of Perec's "painterly" approach to writing and one which, because of its novelty, remains unexplored (1). In the present study Le Condottiere provides material for the discussion of some of the major themes in Perec's writing, namely the place of forgery and realism in the process of artistic creation. This thesis does not so much study the evolution of Perec's use of painting as the fundamental unity and coherence of an oeuvre of which Perec said:

> "je sens confusément que les livres que j'ai écrits s'inscrivent, prennent leur sens dans une image globale que je me fais de la littérature, mais il me semble que je ne pourrai jamais saisir précisément cette image, qu'elle est pour moi un au-delà de l'écriture, un 'pourquoi j'écris' auquel je ne peux répondre qu'en écrivant, différant sans cesse l'instant même où, cessant d'écrire, cette image deviendrait visible, comme un puzzle inexorablement achevé."
>
> (P/C, 12)

For these reasons a study of paintings and painterly practice in Perec's oeuvre can be conducted without extensive reference to many of the other ways in which Perec, as a man and as an intellectual, engaged with painting. However, it is perhaps useful here to give a brief summary of Perec's collaboration with artists for art books and exhibition catalogues (2).

Perec and the visual arts (3)

Perec's collaboration with artists involved a deep understanding of their work and its transposition to a literary form. This type of work is therefore based on a double constraint: the language constraint which regulates his poetry, and the discovery of a literary form which will mirror the painting. Just as Perec's work for cinema and, above all, for music and radio, exploited the sound qualities of the medium (in Hörspiel but also in films like UHQD, Les Lieux d'une fugue, Flaubert), his writing for painting reflects a more aesthetic approach.

Each of these works, Perec said at a colloquium on illustrated books ("Art et Poésie: le livre illustré", Bologna, 28 November 1981) is particular to the artist or art works for whom or for which it was written. Some constants may nevertheless be seen in the pictorial aspects which attracted Perec to an art form and in the literary expression found by the author to convey this affinity in method.

Pierre Getzler, Perec's oldest artist friend, is a particular case in that he shares with the author many ideas on artistic creation: the use of constraint; combinatorial and citational practices; the treatment of space; the notion of realism. In 1981 Perec defined their "collaboration" as an "endemic" one:

> "Pour l'instant c'est surtout un peintre avec qui je travaille beaucoup mais je dois dire d'une façon endémique, d'une façon continuelle, c'est-à-dire que j'ai l'impression que tout ce qu'il fait dans son travail trouve un écho dans ce que je fais dans mon écriture et vice versa, ce que j'écris trouve un écho dans sa peinture."
>
> (Bologna conf.)

Hence, perhaps, Perec's choice of the palindrome as the literary form which, for its mirror construction, best expresses this type of collaboration ("Palindrome pour Pierre Getzler", 1970).

The other artists with whom Perec worked may be roughly divided in two groups. A first group would include artists who are more concerned with the texture of

their paintings and who use different materials such as metal and resins to "fabricate" volume and a more tactile plasticity (Paolo Boni, Claude Berge and France Mitrofanoff). For these artists Perec produced poems which are constructed by using the basic material of the language system, the letters of the alphabet, as the building blocks for combinatorial poems.

The second group privileges a more intrinsically visual approach. Both Jacques Poli and Peter Stämpfli break representational rules in a way that comes close to hyperrealism. Their technique consists in depicting a minute detail (insect carapaces, wheels of a car) in magnified proportions so that the object represented is transformed into something different or verges on the unreal. Cuchi White's photographs of trompe l'oeil are based on the same principle of deception. In the space of any one of her photographs one finds, side by side, the painted wall, the precision of which makes the spectator doubt his own perception, and the real world which, by contrast, seems almost as if it had been painted around the trompe l'oeil. This breaking of the rules is to be found throughout Perec's oeuvre and is discussed in Chapter 5 below. More specifically, the texts written to accompany the works of these three artists all have a visual aspect to them. Apart from the two "Tentatives d'inventaire" for Jacques Poli they include: a "beau présent" (for Poli), a fourteen-stanza long heterogrammatic poem which begins with the letters included in the artist's name, one more letter of the alphabet being added each stanza (for Stämpfli), and bilingual poems using the Mathews Corpus whereby each word can be read, at the same time, in English and in French (for Cuchi White). In all these cases the constraint on which the poem is based is not obvious if the poem is simply heard, although the restrictions in the number of letters and words that may be used in any one poem create aural effects which also appeal to the sense of hearing. But in order to appreciate these poems fully , they need to be seen or, even better, worked out with pencil and paper. The same is true also of other Oulipian constraints such as lipograms and palindromes. A drawing effect may also be found in the use of typography and page layout in works such as Eses and Vme. Indeed, one of the reasons given by Perec for his collaboration with artists is an interest

in producing beautiful books (Bologna conference, 1981). Some of these books were in fact hand-made and Perec took an active role both in the manufacture and in the decisions to be made on shape, layout and typography.

However, although typography and layout play a fundamental role in Perec's poetic and fictional works, the visual quality of his writing is borne out also by the very special way in which he produces visual effects through language and structure.

Structure of this thesis

The aim of this study is to define both the visual quality of Perec's writing and the use of painterly concepts and techniques (4). An analysis of these concepts in Le Condottiere and in Vme will provide an understanding of fundamental aspects of Perec's better known fictional texts.

Chapter 1 discusses first of all the implementation of the author's first description of Vme as the "description d'un tableau", namely Saul Steinberg's "The Art of Living". Secondly, it analyses the use of the frame as a way of blurring the distinction between the different levels of representation, something which is contrary to the traditional idea of mimesis whereby art ought to be a copy of the real. Chapter 2 defines Perec's concept of realism, elicited through the aesthetic theory of the Swiss artist Paul Klee, whose work he studied carefully in the late 50s-early 60s. This concept combines personal experience, formal research and the idea that a realist work should include a certain degree of falsification of the truth. It is a concept that stayed with Perec throughout his writing career. In one of the last interviews he gave, Perec defined "invention" in terms that are not very different from his first reflections on realism:

> "L'invention part toujours pour moi d'une invention formelle. Au départ il y a un besoin tracé d'écrire et ce besoin d'écrire trouve sa source dans une expérience personnelle ou dans quelque chose qui m'arrive et qui ensuite est transformé au moyen d'une invention formelle."
>
> (EP 1983, 70)

The second part of this chapter deals with Le Condottiere, written in 1958-60, which puts into practice Perec's ideas on realism and the process of artistic creation through the theme of forgery. In Chapter 3, Perec's definition of Vme as the "description d'un tableau" is applied not to a painted tableau but to the table (or tableau) of formal constraints which regulate the novel. This chapter analyses also the occurrence of "ingredient" art, that is to say the fragments from the ten paintings which are inserted in the novel according to the place allocated to them by the Graeco-Latin bi-square. A comparative study of the types of paintings (portraits, landscape, still lifes) and the treatment of character, setting and objects in Vme, reveals an affinity in method which makes the insertion of these ten paintings an expression of the combination between the "personal" and the formal constraint in Perec's writing.

Chapter 4 looks at the treatment and role of "visible" art, that is to say the paintings which figure in Vme, and at the image of the fictional artist. This practice is compared to the use of writing in painting, specifically in the works of Holbein, Van Eyck and Carpaccio, and to the tradition of ekphrasis and the representation of the artist in some literary forms (Diderot, Balzac, Zola). Chapter 5 analyses the use of painterly techniques (such as composition, perspective, illusionist devices, the use of space) as correlates for textual practices: ekphrasis, the different kinds of description, the structure of the sentence, fragmentation, the concepts of space and time.

Vme is an example of Perec's painterly writing which can be seen in the direct and indirect use of artists and art works, in the visual aspect of the text and in more specifically painterly concepts and techniques. This does not mean that aesthetic terminology is applicable to Perec's writing but rather that a painterly quality is part of both the superficial choice of subject and of the very fabric of the text.

This study has developed from a literal application of Perec's injunction "Look with all your eyes, look!" (the Verne epigraph in Vme). Looking not only at the text but also at the art works and iconic objects implicitly or explicitly mentioned in the

novel seems to do more justice to the text and to Perec's often mentioned "artistic sources". Perec's use of painting may be regarded as an acute example of what he defined, in Wse, the "snares of writing":

> "Une fois de plus, les pièges de l'écriture se mirent en place. Une fois de plus, je fus comme un enfant qui joue à cache-cache et qui ne sait pas ce qu'il craint ou désire le plus: rester caché, être découvert."
>
> (Wse, 14)

By using one's eyes one can see some of the "snares of writing" more clearly but this does not necessarily make them any less complex. As we shall see, following the author's injunction does indeed reveal aspects of Perec's writing that are not merely decorative but have fundamental, intellectual and artistic importance.

Chapter 1

"Description d'un tableau, 1"

The Art of Living

> "Séance du 8 novembre 1972 [extraits]
> Présents: FLL, RQ, G. Perec, J. Lescure, Luc
> Etienne, P. Fournel, M. Benabou [. . .]
> Création:
> G. Perec: du petit lait pour FLL: projet de
> roman à Oulipo sémantique
> 3 structures mathématiques
> • polygraphie du chevalier sur un échiquier de 10
> • bicarré latin d'ordre 10
> • fausse dizaine
> description d'un tableau: une maison dont
> on a enlevé la façade:
> 10 étages: 10 pièces par étage."
> (Oulipo archives, quoted in Bellos, GPLW, 508)

The initial idea of Vme as the "description of a painting" was originally suggested by Saul Steinberg's drawing depicting a four-storey apartment-block with its façade removed (Fig. 1). The device of taking off part of the building (usually a wall or the roof) so as to lay its content open to view has been used long before Steinberg in many art forms. By and large, most paintings of interiors and, indeed, theatre itself, rest on the convention of the abolition of the fourth wall. More specifically, it has been used in painting (Bertall's "Une Maison bourgeoise", the Genji Monogatari Emaki, the Flemish Kunstkabinetts), in literature (Le Sage's Le Diable boiteux) or in miniature for dolls' houses (1). The device usually implies an omniscient observer - be he author, narrator or painter - who, by taking off the façade (or the roof) is able to see and represent the life and/or dwellings of an individual or of a social group - the collector in Cabinet Pictures, Saint Jerome's study, Victorian houses and the customs of their inhabitants, the dreams and thoughts of 18th-century Parisians (Le Diable boiteux) ; or to witness, unseen, a scene in an important figure's life (the game of go at the

Emperor's court in the Genji scroll).

Of all these models Steinberg's drawing is the one that comes closest to Perec's novel. It was published in an anthology, the title of which - The Art of Living - is no less deceptive than Perec's La Vie mode d'emploi. In fact, despite the promising titles, neither book provides ready-made solutions for better living. Instead they juxtapose, with little concern for verisimilitude, a variety of characters whose only affinity is that they share the same address, almost as if to say that if there is a universal way of living, it is to see the differences and learn to live with it.

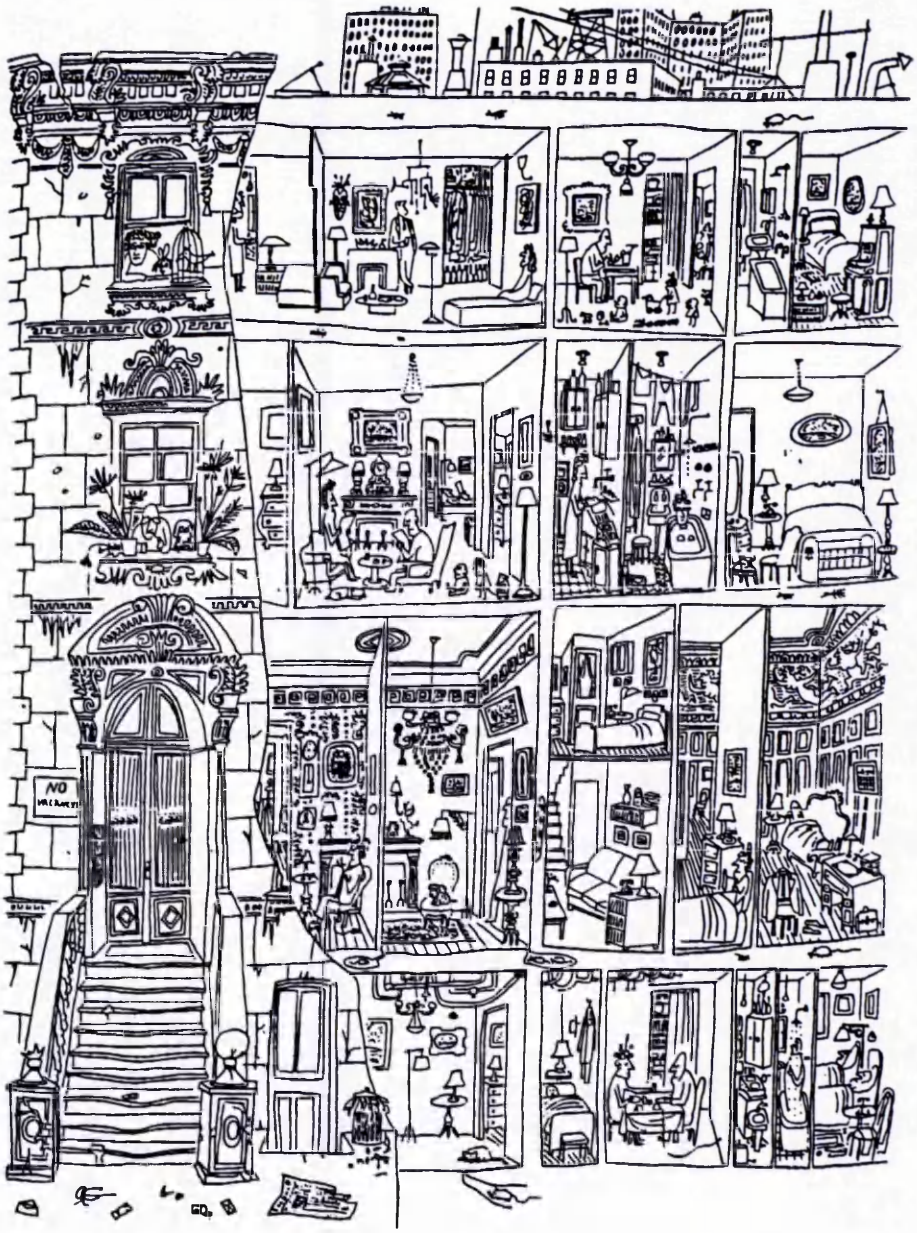


Fig. 1. Saul Steinberg, "The Art of Living (1949)

One passage illustrates further the relevance of Steinberg's drawing not only to Vme but also to Perec's writing. Speaking of this source in Eses (58-61), Perec first of all presents us with a two-page inventory of the objects and actions represented in the drawing. "Le seul inventaire - et encore il ne saurait être exhaustif - des éléments du mobilier et des actions représentées", Perec said, "a quelque chose de proprement vertigineux" (Eses, 58). He goes on nonetheless to give us a narrative interpretation of some of these elements. One can presume, for instance, that the lady on the ground floor is the owner, and that a change in circumstances has forced her to split the house into separate lodgings, giving up even her most beautiful room (the fire-place of which is split in two by a dividing wall) ; that television has not yet been invented, since there are none in the building; that curly hair is in fashion, and so on.

Such an explanation provides an instance of Perec's "narrative descriptions" of paintings whereby the image is "read" or "translated" into narrative (2). Gérard Guyomard*, one of Perec's artist friends (who also figures in Vme, 44, 296, 530), believes that what Perec saw in paintings was a kind of reservoir of stories waiting to be extrapolated from the pictorial images, hence his preference for figurative art (3).

The passage on Steinberg's drawing corroborates Guyomard's view of the "Perec-narrateur", mainly concerned with the narrative potential of the image. However some aspects of Perec's writing clearly show that his appreciation of art goes far beyond the simple idea of art works as generators of fiction, towards a reflection on the creative process.

In this Perec follows Steinberg's own idea, often quoted in interviews and critical essays, of a "reader" who gives meaning to his work :

> "Je réclame la complicité de mon lecteur qui transformera cette ligne en signification, en utilisant notre fonds de culture, d'histoire, de poésie."
> (Butor, 1966, unpaged) (4)

Graphic works requiring a reader and "painterly" novels like Vme subvert the

traditional view of painting and literature as two quite separate art forms. Since Aristotle, painting, having a self-contained existence, has been considered the domain of space, whereas literature, evolving in sequence, belongs to the temporal sphere.

Perec brings the subversion to its logical conclusion. The way in which the original pictorial source is translated into the novel is not, as one would expect, an imaged representation of the different classes of Parisian society (as in Mercier's Tableaux de Paris), although the relationship between the three main characters (Bartlebooth, Valène and Winckler) has been seen in Marxist terms as the characterization of capitalist society's class system (Mathews 1988, 36). Nor does Perec use the image of the building simply as a starting point for a series of more or less related stories (as in Butor's Passage de Milan or in Calvino's Il Castello dei destini incrociati).

Instead of concealing the source and describing the building and its inhabitants as if it were a painting, Perec opts for a literal transposition through the intermediary of Valène's painting. This choice pertains to a novel that privileges the spatial dimension over the more conventional temporal one (one of the possible interpretations of Vme being that it is the description of a delimited space, 11 rue Simon-Crubellier, seen in the few moments in which the "action" takes place) and partakes of the broader question of the perception and the representation of space.

One of the definitions of space given by Perec (Eses, 109) is very similar to the description an art historian may give of the pictorial space:

> "Notre champ visuel nous dévoile un espace limité [...]. C'est ainsi que nous construisons l'espace: avec un haut et un bas, une gauche et une droite, un devant et un derrière, un près et un loin."
>
> (Eses, 109)

Like Perec's space, the painting usually has, in art criticism, a right and a left, a top and a bottom, a foreground and a background. (5)

According to French structuralist theoreticians (Ricardou 1967, Hamon 1972, Barthes 1968, 1970, 1973) this kind of delimitation of space, or "framing", is an essential part of any description. Writing about Balzac's Sarrasine, Barthes even goes so far as to say that the frame is far more important than the scene represented:

> "Toute description littéraire est une vue. On dirait que l'énonciateur, avant d'écrire se poste à la fenêtre, non tellement pour bien voir mais pour fonder ce qu'il voit par son cadre même : l'embrasure fait le spectacle."
> (Barthes 1970, 61)

Claude Burgelin has a similar view of Perec's fascination with framed images (Burgelin 1984, 169). According to Burgelin the frame is paramount in Perec's writing: it provides a structure for the object or the scene represented and, by so doing, it permits its existence.

One direct consequence of the focalisation on Valène's painting is a sort of generalised mise en abyme. First, second and third degree characters (that is to say those who live in the building, those who are only relevant to someone else's story and those in books and paintings) are all in fact second degree characters, since they are first of all figures in the painting. What distinguishes them is the degree of "secondness".

The treatment of characters, objects and landscapes does not change according to the level of representation, which makes it difficult to locate precisely the level at which the reader stands at any given moment. The interposed frame, together with the numerous "internal" frames, add a further distance between the reader and the novel and achieve the opposite effect of making the general picture flatter, almost two-dimensional.

Secondly if the novel as a whole "frames" the apartment-block, the chapters act as mini-frames, singling out rooms in the building. They often begin with a short sentence which situates the room or introduces its occupier and which could be seen as the title of the "painting" ("La salle d'attente du Docteur Dinteville", XLVII; "Le

boudoir de Madame Altamont", LXII; "David Marcia est dans sa chambre", LXXV, etc.).

The shape of the frame or, in more literary terms, the structure of the chapter is not always the same: the "rooms" chapters are intercalated by the "stairs" and "basement" chapters - which work quite differently - to avoid a repetition that would have been, in the long run, tedious. However, the "rooms" chapters can be classified according to two main patterns:

(a) the closed-frame pattern when the chapter begins with a description of the room, moves on to narration, brought about by a particular object or person, or simply the life story of one of the characters, then finishes with description. Or, vice versa, the chapter can begin with a narrative background (of the room or of the present, past and future occupiers) and plunge into the description of a character, an object or of the room before ending again with a narrative passage.

(b) the open-frame pattern: the chapter begins with a description (or a narrative passage), shifts to a narration (or a description) without coming back to the initial description (or narration).

The descriptions themselves contain many pointers to an extra-diegetic dimension outside the frame: books and newspapers open at a specific page, allusions to other literary works (including Perec's own), real films and paintings, etc. - a constant invitation to continue the reading elsewhere. Two art works help explain Perec's use of the frame. The first is once again a Steinberg drawing (Fig. 2), showing an unruly artist whose canvas is obviously too small: his brush draws an intricate tangle of lines going from the canvas on to the surrounding landscape and back to it. The second is Holbein's "Ambassadors" in which the artist inscribes elements that refer to the historical context in which the picture was painted, to the identity of the models or that of the painter, in an attempt to bring the whole world into his canvas (see pp. 99-100 below). Perec's descriptions may be compared to both art works in the sense that, like Steinberg and Holbein, Perec puts in a frame only to break its boundaries.

Fig. 2 Saul Steinberg, Untitled drawing from Les Masques (1966)

This "apprehension" of the world is an example of "incorporation". It comes from the sad realisation that there is no such thing as an immutable space:

> "J'aimerais qu'il existe des lieux stables, immobiles, intangibles, intouchés et presque intouchables, immuables, enracinés; des lieux qui seraient des références, des points de départ, des sources [...]. De tels lieux n'existent pas, et c'est parce qu'ils n'existent pas que l'espace devient question, cesse d'être évidence, cesse d'être *incorporé*, cesse d'être *approprié*. L'espace est un doute: il me faut sans cesse le *marquer*, le *désigner*; il n'est jamais à moi, il ne m'est jamais donné; il faut que j'en fasse la conquête".
>
> (Eses, 122) (6)

(My italics)

One of Perec's early models, Jules Verne, uses frames in a similar manner: Verne's port-holes, Roland Barthes explains, are an attempt to reduce the world to a confined space which he could then inhabit comfortably (Barthes, 1957, 80-81). Vme presents the same double mouvement: on the one hand the disclosure (removing the façade), on the other the enclosure, the creation of a delimited space, that will "structure" and authenticate the real.

In S/Z Barthes analyses the importance of the frame in literature (Barthes 1970, quoted, in part, on page 23 above). According to the French theoretician, the writer has to "frame" the image, that is to say, he has to transform it into a painted object, before he can describe it. This is why, in his view, realism consists less in copying the real than in copying a "framed" image of it. Writing therefore can only ever achieve a second degree mimesis. Perec's approach to the concept of the real encompasses, as we have seen, Barthes's definition but also the notion of "copy" as the deliberate falsification of the forger. In order to discuss the two complementary notions of realism and falsification it is essential to define the influence of two artists on Perec's reflections on art and literature in the late 1950s and early 60s: Paul Klee and Antonello da Messina.

Chapter 2

Paul Klee and Antonello da Messina

The origins of Perec's approach to painting

Perec's realism

Paul Klee is explicitly quoted in Vme (the second epigraph, "L'oeil suit les chemins qui lui ont été ménagés dans l'oeuvre", p. 15, comes from the Pedagogical Sketchbooks) and in several interviews where Perec refers to the artist's famous statement "Le génie, c'est l'erreur dans le système" (JB 1978, 36, AH 1978, 22, EP 1983, 70). In one interview he is quoted as the painter who most influenced Perec (JMS 1979, 6). He is also listed amongst the author's "likes" in 1979 (Arc, 38). A small pen drawing by Klee hangs in Jérôme and Sylvie's ideal home beside other Perecquian "fetish" art works: Antonello's "Saint Jerôme", Carpaccio's "Saint George", a department store by Steinberg, Cranach's "Melanchthon" (LC, 12). Some of Klee's ink drawings are included in Les Revenentes amongst paintings by other "e-only" artists (Vermeer, Ernst, Escher, Léger, Getzler) whose art work decorates Edmé d'Ermé de Kleb's baby brothel (Rev, 78). Again in Les Revenentes, Klee's aesthetic theory is mentioned in the monovocalic orgy at the Archbishop's palace in Exeter. The sentence that concludes the passage becomes, in Vme, the epigraph to the last chapter, depicting Bartlebooth's death :

> "J'entends créer! J'entends fère de mes fesses ce qe Klee fézé de ses encres, et Scève de ses vers, et Webern de ses thèmes! Je cherche en même temps l'éternel et l'éphémère!"
>
> (Rev, 114)

In Vme Klee is named , again, as one of the modern artists whose work would deserve to be exhibited at the Marvel House International museum (Vme, 525).

The many references to Paul Klee have not been overlooked by critics, although the artist's influence is often associated with Perec's Oulipian practices: the use of constraint, combinatorial games, manipulation of language and so forth (Mele 1991;

Magné 1989 and 1990). Undoubtedly, Klee's theoretical writings provide a number of aphorisms which could easily be applied to Perec's works (and just as easily to many other contemporary writers). Perec himself used some of these formulas, with his customary irony :

> "Je sais bien que c'est Klee qui a dit : "Le génie, c'est l'erreur dans le système" et que c'est une phrase de con, à tout prendre."
>
> (Défense de Klee, f. 6)

Likewise, some critics see Perec's interest in Klee as purely onomastic and linguistic. The sequence of letters "K - L - E - E" contains the eleventh letter of the alphabet ("K") numerically connected with Perec's mother's deportation (on 11 February 1943) and the letter of absence, the "E", the letter that disappeared in La Disparition. Read in sequence, the syllable is pronounced as "clef", again a reference to Perec's autobiography (see Wse, 23), as well as to his use of hidden rules and messages which invite decoding (Magné 1990, 174).

However pertinent these remarks may be, Perec's interest in the work of Paul Klee can be traced back to 1959, long before his contact with the Oulipo, when he wrote a short text entitled Défense de Klee, which he sent to Pierre Getzler as a letter. There is also evidence that Perec studied Klee's work and went to see the Klee Foundation in Berne in 1964 (FP 31 is a small notebook entitled "Voyage en Suisse avec Pierre" and contains notes on the Klee Foundation) (1). It is clear then that aphorisms and linguistic games cannot, on their own, elicit such a deep-rooted and well-documented affiliation. On the contrary, the pertinence of Klee to Perec's oeuvre is not immediately obvious and needs some explaining.

It is partly through the Swiss artist's graphic and theoretical work that Perec explored realism in art and literature, questioning the nature of the real, the role of art and of the artist, and the means by which to achieve a "realist" work (2). It is not a coincidence if, right at the centre of the palindromic celebration of his artist friend, Pierre Getzler, with whom he discussed at length the question of realism in this period,

is a line joining the two words "réel" and "Klee" ("Palindrome pour Pierre Gezler", 1970).

> PG
> Elan ici venu à je - Nul Eden, et ni art-noce ni le fallace lustre vu, O traître vase tuteur à l'Ecole - Mêles sectes et Ordre. Plisse, déçu: Trucs? Boréal chemin radial - Nu à lie, rape, porte-idole: MédraNoë, Lasare, Martyrologe! Eh, Port Said à cran - *item*: un à lucre héliotrope - le Fleuve (Nil, Ob...) mort secrète, je révère, vivant élu, Outamaro napolitain - *Système* - Passage du névé *Réel*_____
> _____Klee revenu, Degas sapé, Metsys - Nia-t-il, O panorama tu, où l'Etna vive - Rêve - rejeter Stromboli né, vu: Elfe, le Port, O île
> - Herculanum -
> *Et in Arcadia ego* (strophe) *ego*
> L'or y tramera sa léonarde mélodie: Trope pareil à un lai d'Arnim, eh, claer -obscur! Tu cèdes s'il perd? Rotes - et cesse le mélo, cela rue. Tu t'es averti - Art ouvert, su: le cal (*-la féline contrainte-*) né de lune jaune vicinale.
>
> GP

It is also, perhaps, through Klee that Perec reflected upon concepts of space and time, since a similarity in approach may be discerned in this respect.

The question of realism cannot be answered without the intervention of a concept of the "real", a concept that never ceased to occupy Perec's mind. In the text written to accompany Cuchi White's photographs of trompe l'oeils (1981), he writes:

> "La définition d'un trompe-l'oeil est apparemment simple: c'est une façon de peindre quelque chose de manière que cette chose ait l'air non peinte, mais vraie; ou, si l'on préfère, c'est une peinture qui s'efforce d'imiter à s'y méprendre le réel.
> La peinture, on peut supposer que l'on sait ce que c'est: des pigments d'origines diverses, mélangés à des liants particuliers, et disposés sur des supports variés en couches plus ou moins minces. Mais le réel ? Où commence-t-il? Où finit- il? Et comment pourra-t-on jamais vérifier la véracité du message transmis à nos centres visuels? Ne voyons-nous pas de nos yeux les rails des chemins de fer se rencontrer bien avant l'infini?"
>
> (L'Oeil ébloui, unpaged) (3)

Klee's vision of the world is, like Lukács', that of a meaningless chaos waiting to be ordered by the artist. In addition, objects can assume different forms and meanings, depending on the context in which they are seen, and the identity of the viewer (Haftmann 1954, 46). The real, then, is first of all a matter of personal experience; the artist's first task is therefore to know the self: only then will he be able to establish a relationship between the self and the world. Interestingly, the solution found by Klee to express the real was "Gnothi se auton", "know thyself" (Klee 1959, 224), a Greek formula that is at the origin of a pun, "Les Gnocchis de l'automne", used by Perec in a short text in which he attempts to define his approach to writing (Jsn, 67-74) (4).

One consequence of the subjective vision of reality is the modification of the notion of space. Both Klee and Perec present us with a constructed and fragmented space, precisely because this is the way in which reality is perceived and transformed by the viewer's mind. Eses is the book that best typifies this attitude. Written in the context of his work with Cause commune, which was concerned with the observation and representation of the "infra-ordinary", it deals mostly with "interior" spaces - the rooms in which he slept, places he visited, books he read and so on - fragmented and re-sorted into thematic order (the page, the street, the town, the countryside, etc.) (5).

However, the definition of "personal experience" as it applies to Klee is at variance with that which applies to Perec. In fact, whereas for Klee it also encompasses the subconscious, man's inner being and his collective memory, Perec's idea of personal experience includes the set of cultural referents that are part of each individual (6). Even if, at the time, Perec had not yet developed the citational practice that became a typical trait of his literary enterprise, from the very first texts that he wrote (Manderre, Le Condottiere, etc.) the use of pastiche and of unacknowledged quotations is not infrequent. Roger Kléman rightly argues that citational art is equivalent to the use of myth and convention in Joyce or Mann (Kléman 1967, 162). Compared to Klee, Perec's use of the written tradition could almost be regarded as a shorter and selective collective memory. Chapter 3 will discuss Perec's

implementation of the allusions to paintings in Vme and how these may indeed be considered part of his "personal" sphere.

The influence exerted by the self and by history does not preclude reality; the study of nature remains, in Klee's opinion, a "condition sine qua non" (Klee 1961, 63). In fact, despite his departure from conventional figurative representation, Klee never turned his back on reality. Reality is intended here as all the small things of life. As a young man, Klee spoke of "Andacht zum Kleinen", consideration for small things, subverting the Aristotelian principle of deduction which had up until then held sway in academic art. In fact, whereas in traditional art forms the single item was deduced from predetermined absolutes of Form, Beauty, etc., Klee induced these absolutes from the observation of the smallest forms (7). Perec's conception of the real is equally based on an interest in the small things of life, in the "infra-ordinary", as it was called by one or another of the editors that met around Cause commune ("Infra-ordinaire" is the title of Cause commune, n° 5, February 1973). In a text written for the review ("Approches de quoi?" 1973), Perec deprecates the fact that objects and events draw our attention, or indeed come into being, only when they are extraordinary. The writer should be concerned instead with the "infra-ordinary", the "endotic" (a term coined to signify the opposite of "exotic").

This is where Perec and Klee part company: whereas for Klee the ordinary was the basis for an elaboration of the intuitive, if not intellectual, kind, Perec's method of describing, or rather enumerating, all the small things that make up the real aimed at realism, since it is precisely when reality is described exhaustively and when it is devoid of any intellectual speculations that realism is achieved:

> "Pour moi c'est cela le véritable réalisme: s'appuyer sur une description de la réalité debarassée de toutes présomptions."
>
> (FV 1979, Jsn, 90) (8)

There is another way in which Perec's attitude towards the real may be linked to Klee's. For Klee the observation of the real served the purpose of understanding the

laws that regulate its functioning (Muller 1956, unpaged) and of penetrating to the core of the object, beneath the visible surface (Klee 1961, 66). Only when the object has been fully apprehended through dissections and cross-sections, can it be represented on canvas. In this respect , the difference between Klee's approach to nature and that of Renaissance artists is one of degree. As the painter wrote in his "Ways of Studying Nature":

> "Yesterday's artistic creed and the related study of nature consisted [...] in a painfully precise investigation of appearance [...]. In this way excellent pictures were obtained of the object's surface filtered by the air; the art of optical sight was developed, while the art of contemplating unoptical impressions and representations and of making them visible was neglected. Yet, the investigation of appearance should not be underestimated; *it ought merely to be amplified.*"
> (Klee 1961, 63)
>
> (My italics)

It is a different conception of the real, the natura naturans, rather than the finished forms. By looking inside the object, the artist extends his view from the present to the past, from the object to its matrix. Creation becomes "genesis" (Klee 1961, 92), the artist attains the primordial and the transcendental. For Perec, the creative process includes something like a notion of "genesis", only, in this case, it is closer to Lukács's concept of the "active memory", that is to say a memory which apprehends and transforms the object (Luckács 1920, 126).

On the other hand, Perec's systematic dissections and "amplifications" of reality bear a certain resemblance to this aspect of Klee's aesthetic theory. Texts like "Station Mabillon" or Eses, as well as the many descriptions in Perec's oeuvre, serve the double purpose of amplification - taking a portion of space and exhausting all its possibilities, as if it were examined under a microscope - and of dissection, since description in general (and Perec's descriptions in particular) denature space through fragmentation into perceptive (and semantic) units. The narrative conceit of Vme, with its attendant element of voyeurism, of penetrating inside the object, is the example that best

illustrates this type of vision.

Finally, Perec's concept of the natura naturans may be elicited through the articles written for Partisans in the early 60s. One of the reasons why Perec dismissed Robbe-Grillet's novels is that, in his view, the latter's descriptions "fixed" the world in an immobile state, depriving it of any possibility of change. In this sense Robbe-Grillet's novels perpetuate the order established by capitalist society and give a false image of the world, since reality is not a fixed entity (L.G., 34 and Partisans, n° 11).

Another way in which Perec's concept of the real may be considered to be of the natura naturans kind is in what may be called, after Jürgen Ritte, the "Method of Apocalypsis" (Ritte 1992). In a review of Alban Berg's "Wozzeck" (entitled "Wozzeck ou la méthode de l'apocalypse", L.G., 163-179), Perec explains that Alban Berg, like Klee, introduces into his opera a notion of distance, depicting Wozzeck's fate in such a way as to disallow catharsis on the spectator's part. In this way, Berg's intervention in the text, from the point of view of the musical score as well as from that of its content, is the only possible "realistic" representation, since it forces the viewer to focus on the mechanisms that made Wozzeck's alienation come into being. Robert Antelme's L'Espèce humaine and Resnais's Hiroshima mon amour make use of the same method (see respectively L.G., 87-114 and 139-162). In L'Espèce humaine, for example, Antelme avoids giving an unadulterated account of the truth about life in concentration camps in an attempt to prohibit the morbid curiosity and the short-lived and all too facile indignation which, in his experience, the technique of "brute reconstitution" invariably arouses. The experience of the camp is mediated in a literary form. Antelme organises his material, establishing connections between the different elements, alternating facts and explanations. The experience thus conveyed is not necessarily true in the banal sense that it is in strict accordance with fact or reality. Tampering with the truth through aesthetic manipulation aspires to the revelation of a higher truth, a truth that transcends the factual.

The distinction between "true" and "false" needs therefore to be modified. A work of art may distort the real in order to reach a deeper truth. In this case the "lie",

so to speak, is only a displaced truth. Furthermore, objects, in Klee's view, can change according to the context in which they are seen (see above, p. 30). This being so, what is a "true" image of reality ? A partial answer may be found by considering the object as an element of a whole : its "realness" comes from the object itself, perceived from different angles and also from the surrounding objects which all contribute to the creation of space, perspective and meaning. The "true" image is thus the combination of all the separate "realemes", a combination that, as in Gestalt theory and in puzzle-solving, possesses qualities as a whole that are not merely the sum total of its parts (9).

Lastly, an art work is, by definition, a false representation of reality, since there is necessarily a discrepancy between reality and the medium used to represent it. The credit for this notion is to be attributed in part to Italo Svevo's La Coscienza di Zeno (1923) which stages Zeno Cosini's inability to put his inner thoughts down on paper (10). "A written confession is always a lie" says Zeno (p. 325), especially when he who writes is not in command of the tools in his possession.

From a formal point of view, the "painstakingly" faithful reproduction of the real is impossible without the help of illusionist procedures and therefore any work of art carries within itself the notion of falsification. The Renaissance painters who, for the first time in the Art History, theorized on the ways and means of representing the real, developed Euclidean optics into perspective, a system which created the illusion of reality. Seeking to render the world as it was, they replaced reality with formal convention (see p. 205 below on perspective).

The realist work

If reality is chaotic, subjective, internalized and mnemonic, and if all art work necessarily comprises a certain degree of falsification, then the definition of realism as the "reproduction of the real" looses all significance.

The role of art is not to reproduce the chaos of empirical life but to create, out of this chaos, an ordered and coherent reality. As Perec wrote to Pierre Getzler:

> "Je ne crois pas [...] comme je l'affirmai moi-même quand il était question de roman, qu'un univers absurde se signale par des failles, par des défauts - il se peut que le monde construit soit tout aussi cohérent que le monde nécessaire."
>
> (Défense de Klee, f. 2)

In this sense, Klee's realism is not immediately obvious, since he does not always appear to present a coherent vision of the world. Indeed his paintings necessitate a careful and lengthy observation before they can be understood. This is, incidentally, one of the reasons for Pierre Getzler's reticence about Klee (at least in Perec's account of it in Défense de Klee): in Getzler's view, art should address itself to the ordinary man. Yet, in some ways, Klee's work may be defined as "realist".

First of all, the aim of a realist work is less to please the viewer's eye with beauty and harmony than to provoke a reaction in the beholder:

> "la chose représentée n'est que le support sensible d'une émotion demandée au spectateur, cette émotion ne devant pas être un réflexe mais le point de départ d'une réaction (démarche, prise de conscience, bonheur, euphorie dynamique, compréhension, prise de possession du monde, résolution des contradictions)".
>
> (Défense de Klee, f. 2)

The artist should not necessarily give ready-made solutions to all the mysteries of the world but he should at least provide the viewer with the tools that will enable him to understand his time and to overcome his alienation. Although Perec and Getzler shared the same point of view on the aims of the realist work, their reaction to Klee's paintings differed slightly. Getzler's attitude towards Klee was somewhat sceptical since his work presented the viewer with yet more mysteries; instead of providing answers, Klee's work puzzled and disturbed. Perec's answer to this criticism was that it is precisely because Klee intrigues that the viewer is forced to think for himself; it is because what he depicts is sometimes disturbing that the spectator feels the need to look somewhere else. The Renaissance artists, Antonello above all, had found all the solutions. Their paintings are reassuring because they show the artist's mastery and a

world which is completely under control. But man needs both: the mastery and the troubled mind; the assurance and the anguish:

> "Klee apparaît comme un miroir; il ne donne pas d'explications: il a eu peur, il a peint sa peur. Nous avons peut-être moins peur que lui; nous regardons dans le miroir, puis nous détournons les yeux, nous avons besoin de chercher ailleurs; et parce que nous avons besoin de chercher, et besoin de trouver, nous trouverons. Parce qu'il est faux de prétendre que l'art est un refus de l'inquiétude (Malraux), c'est surtout la conquête d'une nécessité. Notre sensibilité est bicéphale: janus et la porte du temple: la guerre et la paix - l'angoisse et la certitude - 70 et 17 - nous vivons sous ces doubles enseignes."
>
> (Défense de Klee, f. 6)

The ultimate aim of the realist work is thus a movement from the Self to the Other. Leaving aside, for the time being, the games that Perec establishes with his reader (discussed in Chapters 3, 4 and 5), one may identify such a movement in some of Perec's works. Je me souviens is probably the text that best exemplifies this stand: starting from personal memories, the author provokes the reader's memory, which is then prompted to confirm or deny the veracity of Perec's statements, and triggered off into continuing the game.

One of the consequences of this type of representation is that the spectator/reader is left free to interpret the work for himself, to find his own answers to the questions raised by the artist. In a paper delivered at the University of Warwick (1967) Perec stressed the importance of leaving the reader free to choose from a number of possible interpretations. Perec's endings are a typical example of the reader's participation in the work. At the end of LC it is not clear whether Jérôme and Sylvie found the happiness they sought or whether they finally resigned themselves to the absence of happiness in life. Likewise, when the unnamed character of UHQD stands in Place Clichy waiting for the rain to stop, it is not certain that he is ready to plunge back into life (indeed in the story that corresponds to UHQD in Vme (Ch. LII), Grégoire Simpson commits suicide). It is almost as if Perec brought the reader to the

point in which the story may begin, then left him there to continue the story as he wishes. Perhaps the answer is to be found in the quotation that comes at the end of LC:

> "Le moyen fait partie de la vérité, aussi bien que le résultat. Il faut que la recherche de la vérité soit elle-même vraie; la recherche vraie, c'est la vérité déployée, dont les membres épars se réunissent dans le résultat."
> (Karl Marx, quoted in LC, 143)

In the end, what matters is not whether the outcome of the "story" is positive or negative, since such a conclusion would imply an explicit authorial judgement, contrary to all that Perec stood for. What matters is the mechanism that has led to that point and the questions that have been raised in the process. In this lies the difference between "moralism" and "realism" (see the discussion after the lecture given at the University of Warwick, PAP, 39).

However, there seems to be a discrepancy between the amount of freedom left to the spectator and Klee's statement, borrowed by Perec as one of the epigraphs of Vme, "The eye travels along the paths cut out for it in the work". In fact, this assertion suggests that the reader is far from free to draw his own conclusions. The seeming contrast may be resolved by considering the section of the Pedagogical Sketchbooks summarized by this sentence (I.13). Speaking about creation as genesis and continuity, Klee considers the artist's and the receiver's limitations: productively the work is limited by the artist's manual limitations; receptively it is hindered by the limitations of the perceiving eye which "grazes" over the painted surface. A similar formula is used in the "Creative Credo" (Klee 1961, 78) to explain the temporal dimension of painting. The transition from the static dot to the line and from line to plane requires time. "Does a picture come into being all at once?" asks Klee. "No, it is constructed piece by piece, the same as a house". Similarly the viewer needs time to look at the painting. This is why, according to Klee, Lessing's distinction between temporal and spatial art forms is an "academic delusion" since space itself is a temporal notion. The statement quoted in Vme is thus concerned less with the artist's manipulation of the

viewer than with the objective limitations that help to make the participation of both producer and receiver an active one. Moreover, the notion of the temporality of the painting, conceived as a "construction" of the artist, seems to suit perfectly a novel in which the conventional use of the spatial and temporal dimensions is subverted (see below, Chapter 5) and which is, like Klee's paintings, "constructed piece by piece, the same as a house". In short, this sentence affirms both the need for the participation of the receiver, in order to overcome the limitations of the perceiving eye, and that of the artist to be conscious and in complete control of his means.

The artist should attempt to make every sign/word significant and full of meaning:

> "L'intention du réalisme c'est d'abord le choix, la volonté d'enrichir, de charger le réel, de le rendre dense et significatif."
>
> (Défense de Klee, f. 4)

Klee's paintings are characterized by an extraordinary economy of style, simplicity and by an extreme power of expression, precisely because each line has its own meaning and role in the overall structure of the painting.

Perec uses the linguistic sign in a similar fashion. In a lecture, given in October 1981 in Adelaide, he explains the occurrence of velvet trousers in the passage of LC which relates the couple's fears and dreams (pp.105-106): by the simple addition of the word "corduroy" the object acquires a new significance and evokes a different image: in the first instance the frightful uniform of decadent bohemians, in the second, the warm image of healthy countryside life. Moreover words can assume different connotations according to their intertextual recurrence. Such a practice constitutes one of the major elements of differentiation between Perec's writing and that of the "new novelists" who tried, on the contrary, to evacuate meaning from words. Santino Mele (1991) argues that, unlike Klee, who is mostly concerned with the sign, Perec's use of the sign is of an iconic type. For Perec, the "sign" is also the thing, the name of the thing, and of the sign, and the associations that it may bring to mind. If there is

something true in this statement, the iconic quality of Klee's paintings should not be underrated. Perec himself uses this aspect to "defend Klee":

> "l'enfant sur le perron: [...] les couleurs sont très simples, un brun sombre pour la nuit, une espèce de jaune pour la tête, etc, un rouge et un jaune un peu plus vif pour les fenêtres. Le dessin est d'une simplicité déconcertante [...] ce qui est poignant dans l'enfant sur le perron, c'est la nouvelle dimension des choses: les fenêtres allumées dans la nuit soulignent la disparition de la maison, les marches l'éloignent, et l'enfant titube, sans comprendre, et le dessin d'enfant bascule, devient chargé d'une émotion nouvelle (celle que Miro n'a jamais su apprendre), parce que derrière le jeu, le graphisme, les couleurs de la marelle, quelque chose est né, qui n'est pas la puissance, ni la force, ni l'explosion, mais assurément la compréhension du monde".
>
> (Défense de Klee, ff. 4-5)

(Fig.3)

Fig. 3. Paul Klee, "Child on Steps" (1923)
Berne, private collection

Realism and formalism

Formalism is usually regarded as an "excessive adherence to outward form at the expense of reality or content" (The Collins English dictionary, 1979). Such a definition would presuppose that a realist work, as it has been presented above, has little to do with form. Perec himself often made a distinction between the purely formal works, that is to say art works that presented the viewer with an harmonious construction which then becomes its only raison d'être, and those which convey a "message". This does not mean that content-based works should disregard form (L.G., 44-45, 47-66, 66-86). On the contrary, it is through form that the reconciliation between the inward and outward, the hidden and visible surface, personal experience and "objective" reality becomes possible. It is, once again, through painting that this concept may be understood. Lukács thought that the point in which empirical life and the world of essence (the Soul) met was form (Lukács 1974, 16). In Vme it is in a painting, Valène's great unpainted painting, which is one of Vme's most obvious formalist exercises, that is encrypted the word "âme", as if, right at the centre of the book, at the apex of architectural form, we reach real life, the world of essence. This concept may also be found in Klee's theoretical writing. In "Ways of Studying Nature" he writes:

> "All ways meet in the eye and there, turned into form, lead to a synthesis of outward sight and inward vision. It is here that constructions are formed which, although deviating totally from the optical image of an object yet, from an overall point of view, do not contradict it."
> (Klee 1961, 67)

First of all, form provides a structure which can give meaning to the chaos of reality. In The Thinking Eye (Klee 1961, 17) Klee underlines the importance of composition: in a painting every element should be placed in relation to each other in order to attain a "coherent" construction in which chance has no reason for being. The artist's mastery over formal elements and over the composition will, in his opinion, give him the creative power to break out into new dimensions.

Klee's compositional rigour may be seen in those paintings which are based on the chess-board or on magic squares. Despite their apparent abstraction, their meaning lies in the composition itself. Significantly, they bear titles which highlight this aspect: "Architektur rot gelb blau gestuften Kuben", "Harmonie aus Vierecken rot, gelb, blau, weiss und schwartz", "Komposition mit dem B", etc. To quote but one example from Perec's Défense de Klee. "Lagunenstadt" is the sort of painting in which meaning relies on the composition (Fig. 4) :

> "Je pense à ce tableau qui s'appelle "Ville de lagunes": dans le premier plan, des carrés et des rectangles se chevauchant, dans un fond des stries horizontales, les couleurs sont très pâles: violet, rose, bleu, brun: le ciel est bas - le monde étouffe - on dirait un monde de fiches- carrés de différentes grandeurs, de différentes couleurs, les unes au-dessus des autres - un monde serré, où l'eau et le ciel ont la même monotonie, le même goût - un monde absolument mécanique, géométrique, où l'espace n'arrive plus à se conquérir, sous le poids d'un horizon qui n'en finit pas pourtant et qui écrase l'enchevêtrement des maisons: quelque chose à mi-chemin entre la foire-exposition et le camp de concentration, ou les bidon villes ou simplement la grande ville."
>
> (Défense de Klee, f. 4)

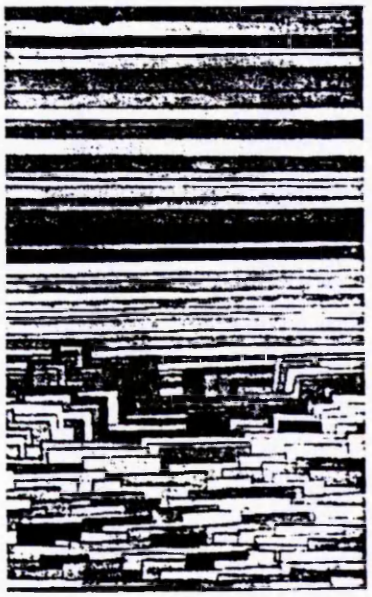


Fig. 4. Paul Klee, "City of Lagoons" (1923). Berne, private collection.

In short, each sign (be it brushstroke or word) should be precise, meaningful, necessary and ordered into a carefully structured composition. Only then can the artist, in complete control of his means, offer a coherent vision of the world.

All formal research leads away from realism, just as any attempt to represent the visible world as faithfully as possible leads to falsification. However, this does not mean that the end result is not realistic, since the aim of the realist work is, as we have seen, to arrive, through form, at a deeper and truer reality.

> "Art does not reproduce the visible but makes it visible. [...] The purer the graphic work, that is, the more emphasis it puts on the basic formal elements, the less well-suited it will be to the realistic representation of visible things."
>
> (Klee 1961, 76)

Before discussing in which way the concept of realism as it has been presented so far, applies to Perec's writing and deciding on the degree of influence exerted by Klee at different stages of his career (the pre-Oulipian works (Condottiere, LC, UHQD), the "social" writing (Cause Commune), Vme) it is perhaps worth recapitulating the main points.

The starting point of the realist work is reality which is not merely the visible world but the interactive combination of the smallest forms as they are apprehended and transformed by the self, with all its fears and contradictions. It is therefore a very special "way of studying nature", a practice of "looking" to which could be applied the apocryphal title attributed to Poussin in UCDA: "J'apprends à regarder" (UCDA, 85) (11). Reality then undergoes a further metamorphosis with the conscious use, on the artist's part, of formal devices that best suit the representation of the real, which, distorted and falsified, becomes a coherent and "true" construction. Such a definition is all contained in a note written by Perec to answer the question "Pourquoi aimons-nous Klee?":

> "Le problème de la possibilité d'un monde cohérent exprimé directement par la peinture. Il faut inscrire le peintre dans l'oeuvre comme élément à son tour contradictoire."
>
> (FP 31, quoted in Bellos, GPLW, 295)

A rediscovered source: Le Condottiere

Written around the time of Défense de Klee, Le Condottiere tells the story of a "forger of genius", Gaspard Winckler, who, having failed to fake an Antonello da Messina, murders his commissioner (see Wse, 142). Over and above the hero's fabulous adventures (the murder, the tunnel, the escape), the novel contains reflections on life and art and, more particularly, on the art of deception, attempting to draw the line between creation and falsification.

As a forgery, Winckler's work is intrinsically antithetical to the notion of "personal experience" (discussed above) since it consists in copying other people's paintings. Creation, by contrast, is regarded by experts and critics as the magical moment in which inspiration "descends" upon the artist. Even for those who reject the idea of inspiration, the creator remains someone who knows how to look both at himself and at reality, and who shows some originality in the formal solutions used to express his vision of the world. This is why, in experts' eyes, a forgery will never be as good as an original, even if some counterfeiters deserve credit for their talent, their patience and the mastery with which they handle ancient techniques (12). Indeed, some forgers have become as famous as great masters: Alceo Dossena, the "man with the magic hands" (Isnard 1959, 180; the formula is applied, in Le Condottiere, to Gaspard Winckler); Van Meegeren, whose patience and genius was acknowledged even by the fiercest opponents of the crime of forgery (Isnard 1955), Lother Malskat, whose precise reproductions of 12th-century frescoes at the Marienkirche in Lübeck were acclaimed as a miracle (Cole 1958, 136).

Yet, the very principle of faking makes their work uninteresting. Later studies on this subject tend to consider forgery as a moral concept rather than an aesthetic one

(Werness 1983; Arnheim 1983): faking is copying with the intention of deceiving. Nobody would think anything wrong of an art student copying old masters' paintings in the National Gallery, simply because there is no fraudulent intention in their action. In this case the viewer can give free vent to his admiration for the fidelity of the reproduction and for the student's mastery of the medium. People's indignation in front of a fake comes from the realisation that they have been duped into thinking they were in communion with the artist's magical moment of creation (Cole 1958; Isnard 1959). The viewer's blindness is the result of the natural short-sightedness with which art lovers look at paintings, placing too much importance on the artist's signature and on the exterior signs of authenticity. This point is taken up by Winckler in Le Condottiere as one of the reasons for the art dealer's success: buyers "dream" of the paintings even before they see them and pay little attention to authenticity certificates. The interplay between expectation and deception, which is part and parcel of all artistic process, is thus magnified in illusionist techniques such as forgery and trompe l'oeil (Perec's use of this mechanism is discussed below, pp. 160-176 and 208-211).

One of the most interesting and insightful views on the notion of originality and fake comes from François Le Lionnais, one of the founders of the Oulipo. In a short text written for the catalogue of the Grand Palais exhibition (1955), he takes a more unfashionable stance by asserting the artist's right of choosing his models (Le Lionnais 1955). After all, he says, a child's first instinct is to imitate his parents. Copying, in this case, may be regarded as the period of apprenticeship which is a necessary stage of the creative process, provided it does not take over the future artist's whole life.

It is essential, at this point, to distinguish amongst the different kinds of forgery as they present different degrees of falsification and self-identification. The production of an exact replica of an existing painting is by far the easiest type of forgery and implies the least involvement on the forger's part (13). The creation of a forged art work can be either a puzzle of elements taken from different paintings by the same artist, or an entirely invented composition copying the artist's manner and technique.

In both cases it requires a certain degree of identification with the chosen painter since the counterfeiter has to complete the artist's oeuvre by adding one more piece to the puzzle, a piece which, in order to find its place in the overall image, has to comply with the artist's choice of subject matter, medium, composition, etc. Winckler cannot produce a puzzle because of the uniqueness of the "Condottiere" (Fig. 5). He first tries to assemble elements from paintings by Antonello and other artists (the neck from Antonello's "Portrait of a Man" in Vienna, the clothes from a portrait by Holbein and the composition from Memling) (Fig. 6-10) (14). However, he comes to realize that what he should seek is not falsification but substitution, that is to say total identification with the chosen artist (15).

Fig. 5. Antonello da Messina, "Le Condottiere" (1475). Paris, Musée du Louvre.

Fig. 6. Antonello da Messina, "Portrait of a Man" (1475) Vienna, Schwarzenberg collection.

Fig. 7. Hans Holbein,
"Portrait of Antoine Le Bon"(1543)
Staatliche Museum, Gemälde galerie

Fig. 8. Hans Holbein,
"Portrait of a Man" (1541)
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum

Fig. 9. Anon
Fake Holbein using Fig. 7 and 8 above
Philadelphia, Johnson collection
Reproduced from Isnard 1980, 73

Fig. 10. Anon
Modern fake in the style of Memling
Reproduced from Isnard 1980, 66

As we have seen, the forger, by definition, makes use exclusively of someone else's "personal experience" and original discoveries. In other words, he substitutes for his own life and art those of the artist he simulates, merely repeating over and over again the same gestures. By so doing he obliterates the self and replaces it with different masks. One consequence of this self-imposed reincarnation is that the forger ceases to exist as a person, not only on account of his chameleon-like ability to change identity according to the artist chosen, but also because a counterfeiter can only live as such if he remains incognito. Being a professional forger means creating a reassuring world which the painter can control and in which he can make believe he is a great artist. Like Calvino who preferred the "written world" (see footnote 6), Winckler seeks refuge in a "painted world". It is the ideal metaphor, if not the logical conclusion, for the myth of the aloof artist, shut away in his ivory tower, that is to say the opposite of the realist artist. What Winckler did not foresee is that, in the long run, he would end up living completely in the past, inside bodies that had been dead and buried for centuries :"Je n'étais qu'une sorte de souvenir parfait, de résurrection "(Le Condottiere, f. 147, © Estate of Georges Perec)

In this sense, Winckler embodies the collective memory but, unlike Klee, his quest into the past is not accompanied by a deep understanding of its mechanisms, nor by an observation of present reality. His personal memory exemplifies this detachment from the world, be it present or past. Memories and events intertwine, change and disappear, leaving an intricate tangle of tracks resembling that left by skis on the snow (Le Condottiere, ff. 37 and 64). It is up to the remembering subject to make sense of it. Winckler's path to consciousness is accompanied by the realisation that the past is only useful if it is transformed by the modern mind. Perec's subsequent "Wincklers" would block out the past and live in an a-temporal present (Wse, UHQD) or, in a complete reversal of roles, consciously ravel the threads (Vme).

In Le Condottiere, Gaspard Winckler cannot be considered a realist artist precisely because he ignores two of the most important ingredients of realism - the self

and the real world. However, implicit in the concept of art as a personal experience, is the idea that the painting is a mirror of its author, or at least that a certain projection on the artist's part is unavoidable. As we have seen, in Perec's view what differentiates Klee and Antonello is their respective projection - anguish in one case, mastery in the other. Winckler comes closer to Klee, in that he projects a "negative" selfhood. This is why, in so far as his commissioned Antonello is concerned, it is a total failure, whilst the portrait itself is a successful image of its author. Where Winckler fails is in faking himself into a "Condottiere".

Winckler's failure to produce his own "Condottiere" will be made clearer by considering the reasons behind his choice of this model. In the novel the choice is attributed to technical reasons: Antonello is the only Quattrocento artist whose paintings can be sold at such a high price; there are hardly any portraits by him in France, which makes comparison difficult; the support and the material can easily be faked. But it soon becomes clear that there are deeper reasons for this choice. The man portrayed in "Le Condottiere" expresses extraordinary strength, energy, and self-confidence. It is the serene power of the man who no longer needs to fight for self-assertion: he dominates the world and does not need to prove it. But whether or not such a man existed, it was Antonello's own mastery and self-confidence that made the portrait so powerful. This point is enhanced, in the real painting, by the cartellino carrying the inscription "Antonellus Messinaens me pinxit", which becomes, in Winckler's head, a sort of refrain to remind himself of the target he needs to achieve.

Antonello's originality was to refuse to use the all too easily recognisable "signs", something which could be seen, with Perec, as the modern realist's approach:

> "Toute situation décrite d'un bout à l'autre nous y mène [au réalisme]; il suffit de refuser les mythes, les explications trop faciles, les hasards, l'inexplicable."
> (L.G., 65)

Other masters of portraiture relied on exterior "signs" to convey the personality of their models:

"Le Mélanchton de Cranach balance entre l'intelligence d'un regard, la finesse d'un sourire, la fermeté des mains: tel est le politique; l'homme de Memling est un sanglier qui prie, une chevelure hirsute, un cou large. Le Robert Chessman d'Holbein n'a que la morgue d'un seigneur, le luxe lumineux du costume, la simple intelligence du veneur. [...] Chardin a besoin de ses lunettes, de sa visière, de son turban, de son foulard, et de tourner la tête, violemment, un regard lucide et ironique, insolent, défiant les petits marquis qui le regardent et le font vivre [...] L'ineffable Balthazar Castiglione, le plus grand humaniste de la Renaissance, paraît-il, ne nous est parvenu qu'avec le sempiternel accoutrement du sage: bonnet de fourrure, belle barbe, broche, pourpoint et dentelles. Les mains se croisent dans une attitude compréhensive".

(Le Condottiere, ff. 135-36) (16)

(Fig. 11-13)

Fig. 11. Lucas Cranach, "Melanchthon"

Fig. 12. Hans Holbein,
"Portrait of Robert Chessman" (1533)
The Hague, Mauritsuis.

Fig. 13. Jean-Baptiste Chardin,
"Self-Portrait" (1771)
Paris, Musée du Louvre.

In "Le Condottiere", on the contrary, the only vector of the hero's life and personality is the face: the eyes, mostly, but also the mouth, the contraction of the jaw muscle and the scar, symbol of his ability to fight (17).

Jean Paris's theory of "Space and Glance" (1965), anachronistic here, could serve the purpose of explaining the importance of the eyes and "glance" (regard) in this painting (Paris 1965 ; Molteni 1993). In order to understand how the artist wanted the viewer to look at his painting, Paris says, one has to look at the character's eyes. The "Condottiere"'s eyes are, in Paris's classification system, a mirror of the soul and an instrument of power. Undistracted, they look at the viewer and at the world with the self-assurance of a "man with the world in his arms", as Perec was fond of saying. Antonello alone can outstare the "Condottiere" because his art can counterbalance and transcend the mercenary's mastery:

> "Pour peindre un 'Condottiere', il faut savoir regarder dans la même direction que lui ... Tu cherchais cette victoire immédiate, ces signes distinctifs de l'omnipotence, ce triomphe. Tu cherchais ce regard clair comme une epée, tu oubliais qu'un homme, avant toi, l'avait trouvé, en avait rendu compte, l'expliquant parce que le dépassant, le dépassant parce que l'expliquant. Dans un mouvement identique. La peinture triomphale ou la peinture du triomphe ?"
>
> (Le Condottiere, f. 87)
>
> (© Estate of Georges Perec)

In other words, to the Condottiere's triumph Antonello opposed an even greater one, emanating from the broader triumph of the Renaissance, when artists questioned their means of expression and constantly found new solutions to improve them.

Given that the art work is the mirror of its author (a recurrent image in Le Condottiere), the reasons for Winckler's failure are to be sought in his own personality. Winckler represents the Condottiere's negative reflection: the latter shows strength, adequacy and self-confidence, the former is, or considers himself to be, an inferior being, whose life and talent are inadequate; the latter has an expression of calm brutality, the former has the nervous and anxious countenance of the man who has to

struggle for self-assertion, with all the bitterness and hatred that it implies. To the painting of triumph Winckler opposes the painting of failure.

The semantic field from which Perec draws the descriptions of the false "Condottiere" is that of madness, intended here as a more or less permanent psychological problem. The adjectives used to describe Winckler denote a strong inferiority complex, due to his inadequacy both as a creative artist (forgers are, almost intrinsically, painters who will never be good artists), and as a person (unable to "give", even in love relationships); a persecution complex resulting in the feeling that he is a victim of fate and of people who took advantage of him; and a hint of split personality, for he is always contradicting himself as if, in the long run, his life - a sequence of borrowed personalities - had affected his way of thinking.

Experts on forgery mostly depict the counterfeiter as someone who is psychologically unsound (Cole in particular, 1958). It is worth mentioning, here, some of the motivations to which the choice of this trade is attributed .

Financial reward comes last in the faker's scale of values, as he is usually exploited by an art dealer who takes a large percentage of the sales for himself. In one of the most spectacular court cases in the history of forgery, Van Meegeren insisted that he did not do it for the money, just as Winckler denies, in his confession, that money played any part in his decision to become a forger (Werness 1983, 48, and Le Condottiere, f. 74). Much more important is the weakness of the counterfeiter and his lack of will-power, which make him the best victim for art dealers. Again, Van Meegeren provides the best example of this state of powerlessness:

> "Boll: Why did you continue after "Emmaus"?
> Van Meegeren: [...] I came to a condition in which I was no longer my own master. I became without will, powerless. I was forced to continue."
> (Werness 1983, 48, also, in French, in Kilbracken 1967, 182-3)

Similarly, Winckler attempts to give up his life as a counterfeiter but finds it impossible to "refuse", without ever being able to explain what made the refusal impossible.

Such a weakness is the result of low self-esteem: the forger generally convinces himself (or is convinced by art critics) of his lack of real talent. Faking, then, provides a source of reflected glory and a revenge on fate or on individuals who denigrated his work: if his paintings can "pass off" as Rembrandts, it follows that he is as good a painter as Rembrandt.

A more aggressive reaction is found in those subjects who tend to shift the blame onto other people such as buyers and critics refusing to acknowledge their ability. In this case, falsification becomes a struggle between two minds: the forger's, whose hatred reaches such an extent that he is able to surpass his own talent, and the receiver's (for example Van Meegeren, quoted by Cole 1958, 137). It may be noted on this point that in the light of Le Condottiere, it is possible to explain Winckler's hatred and the "long and meticulous, patiently laid out plot of his revenge" (L, 6) in Vme. In literary (and Perecquian) terms, it may also be seen as a struggle between the author and the reader.

It seems that the only way to put an end to a life of forgery is a confession. It acts as a liberating agent both from the tyranny exerted by the art dealer and from his own feeling of inadequacy. Malskat's confession is a typical example of revolt: in words that might well be heard in Winckler's mouth he says "I wanted to get rid of Fey, the oppressor and the extortioner" (quoted in Cole 1958, 137; cf. Winckler's definition of his relationship with Madera as master and slave: Le Condottiere, f. 153). Like Dossena, Malskat also used the confession for self-publicity, admitting to hundreds of forgeries, something that could be called the "Anch'io son pittore" syndrome, the wish for self-affirmation of the artist who has learned how to express himself (UCDA, 85).

In Le Condottiere, the syndrome takes even greater proportions since the hero decides to produce a painting that will be both an Antonello and his own, which, as we have seen, is the most difficult and self-involving type of forgery (see above p. 44-45).

Winckler's confession, which takes up the second part of the book, has a liberating function, despite the fact that it is not a public confession. It takes the form of a psycho-analytical session (Streten, according to contract, says very little), leading

to an understanding of the self. To a certain extent, there are echoes of Zeno Cosini's psycho-analysis (Svevo, La Coscienza di Zeno), in so far as, like Zeno, Streten insists on the mendacity of his "patient"'s answers, prodding him to arrive at a more truthful interpretation of the facts.

However, the real liberating agent, in Winckler's case, is his murder of Anatole Madera, his commissioner. In the eyes of the law, Winckler is already a criminal since producing false art works with the intention to deceive is legally regarded as a crime. The theme of art as a crime and, in particular, a crime of deception, runs throughout Perec's oeuvre (Le Condottiere, Vme, UCDA). It becomes a metaphor for the author's own art of deception (see below, pp. 171-173). Less obvious, but just as present in Perec's oeuvre, is the idea of the necessity of crime in the creative process, namely the crime of parricide (18) (19).

David Bellos has identified in the prose version of Verlaine's "Gaspard Hauser chante" (entitled Scénario pour un ballet), one of the sources of the hero of Le Condottiere: Verlaine's Gaspard is an orphan who kills his father, an English millionaire, and he is hanged for it (Bellos 1992b, 56). Another famous orphan to be found amongst Perec's literary sources is Hamlet, whose destiny may be compared to Winckler's.

Perec and parricide

Throughout Perec's oeuvre the allusions to Hamlet are associated with death, often with the father's death. In 1955 Perec wrote at the back of a photograph of his father "Il y a quelque chose de pourri dans le royaume de Danemark" (Wse, 41), quoting Marcellus as Hamlet is about to meet his natural father's ghost (Hamlet, I.IV.90). In Vme, Hamlet is included in the list of allusions (item n° 8 of list n° 17). The allusions point almost exclusively to death and murder:

Vme		Hamlet
Ch. n°	Allusion	
4	"Un Rat derrière la tenture" Painting at Marquiseaux.	Hamlet kills Polonius hiding behind a curtain in Gertrude's room ("What now ? A rat ? Dead for a ducat, dead !" [III. II, 24-5]. Polonius, Laerte's father, says elsewhere that he once played Caesar in a play and was killed by Brutus [III.II,105-6].
19	"La Souricière" (The Mouse-trap), title of a book read by a servant at the Altamonts. It tells the story of a psychopath wreaking murder in a Baltic port (Elsinore ?).	"The Mousetrap", a play staged by Hamlet to tell his adoptive father that he knows how he killed his father. It relates Gonzago's murder by the hand of his nephew who pours poison in his ear [III.II]
34	"La Piqûre mystérieuse", written by G. Berger. In the serial Gormas is killed allegedly stung by a bee but in fact poisoned.	Hamlet's father is murdered by his brother who pours poison in his ear but he is said to have been stung by a snake.
53	Voltimand (Cyrille), G. Winckler's brother-in-law.	A courtier.
54	Decorated plate (Plassaerts): "Une mauvaise farce": a man is sleeping and another pours liquid in his ear.	Hamlet's father's death (cf. 34).
70	Elsinore, port painted by Bartlebooth.	Setting for Hamlet
74	Drowned women in the basement.	The gravediggers' scene [V.I].The gravediggers are burying Ophelia, who has drowned herself because Hamlet has killed her father, Polonius.
81	Polonius, the Rorschashs' hamster, Gertrude's only descendant.	Polonius, Lord Chamberlain, killed by Hamlet in Gertrude's room.
82	Isabelle Gratiolet tells a friend she saw her father's ghost amongst a crowd of terrified guards.	Hamlet's father's ghost [I.V]

In Le Condottiere, there are at least two references to Hamlet: the first occurs after the death of Jérôme Quentin, Gaspard's mentor (Le Condottiere, f. 54). Beside his body, Gaspard finds a book from which he quotes:

> "Let four captains
> Bear Hamlet like a soldier to the stage,
> For he was likely, had he been put on,
> To have proved most royal; and for his passage
> The soldiers' music and the rite of war
> Speak loudly for him."
>
> (Hamlet, V.II,397-401)

In Shakespeare's play, these words are uttered by Fortinbras after Hamlet's death. Hamlet has failed to kill his adoptive father and is himself killed in a duel with Laertes seeking vengeance for his father's death. Fortinbras's words are a sign of respect towards Hamlet: given the chance he would have made a good king but fate had been against him. Applied to Jérôme, it refers to the fact that, perhaps, given the chance, he would have been a real artist. In Le Condottiere Jérôme represents the father figure (or, at least one of them), as he has "given birth" to Gaspard, the Master Forger. At all events, it represents Winckler's virtual image: he often compares his life to Jérôme's (Jérôme is a forger; Jérôme died in solitude; he is a forger; therefore he, too, will end up like Jérôme; Le Condottiere, f. 55), as if he had inherited his personality and his destiny from his tutor.

The second allusion comes in the confession and echoes Hamlet's famous speech "To be or not to be: that is the question [...]" (Hamlet, III.I, 56-90) - on the moral dilemma between taking action against fate or surrender. In Winckler's case it is not a question of life and death but one of acting or non-acting, of making or faking:

> "Faussaire ou pas faussaire, c'était ça le problème,
> c'était ça la solution, c'était ça la question."
> (Le Condottiere, f. 119)
> (© Estate of Georges Perec)

A book by Jean Paris, Hamlet ou le personnage du fils (1953) may elicit the relevance of Hamlet to the themes of parricide and crime in art (20).

Paris situates Hamlet's tragedy in its socio-historical context. Shakespeare's England was troubled by social upheaval which left man with the impression of being prisoner, deprived of freedom and of his inner being. It was an "absurd" society in which the choice was not between "to be or not to be" but between living as an outsider or participating in society's criminal laws ("Something is rotten in the state of Denmark"). Shakespeare's grandeur lies in the fact that, given the choice between giving vent to nostalgia for bygone days and reproducing the chaotic reality of the time, he chooses a third course, namely to dramatize man's striving for freedom and his

struggle for self-assertion (21).

The struggle for freedom is first of all a battle against the self. Only when the individual has reached the abyss of self-denial and imprisonment can he fulfil his role. Secondly, the process of self-assertion is most of all a question of "succession": in order to exist the son has to kill the father (in Hamlet's case it is in fact the adoptive father). Ambition plays little part in this parricide which is seen, on the contrary, as a "necessity".

Shakespeare presents us with three stages of "sonliness": Hamlet, Fortinbras and Laertes, all sons of murdered fathers, all seeking revenge. But, whilst Laertes and Fortinbras incarnate the belligerent principle, Hamlet embodies the conscience. He sees his duty to kill his adoptive father but, instead of acting, he keeps reasoning. Suffering from a "specific aboulia" (Jones 1963, 49), and lacking any will-power, he simply waits in an imaginary world made of dreams, ghosts and fiction (the play), albeit feeling guilty for his cowardice. Even when he does act, he gets his target wrong: Polonius is the King's adviser and therefore a symbol of established authority. By striking a symbol rather than the real enemy, Hamlet shows, once again, that he does not live in the real world. Laertes is Hamlet's mirror image. To assert himself Hamlet has to break the mirror, he has to act:

> "Un être double s'exprime ici 'n'ayant pareil que son miroir, dit-il, n'ayant sillage que son ombre'. Mais, pour s'être en ce miroir trop longtemps contemplé il faut que l''acte' le brise et que l'acteur surgisse hors de ce jeu de symboles et de reflets."
>
> (Paris 1953, 186).

Paris's interpretation of Hamlet's tragedy, here grossly simplified, helps to clarify some traits of Gaspard Winckler's personality. The forger is a little like a dispossessed prince, always feeling that he has been unjustly treated (the meeting with Jérôme, the failed love affairs, etc.) and ironically describing himself as the "King of forgers". One of the reasons for his revolt is that he wanted to find "happiness", which he defines as finding the place one deserves in society. Like Shakespeare's heros', his

life is a prison in which he is deprived of real existence. But, in this case, the metaphor is taken literally: by choosing a faker as the Hamlet figure of his tragedy, Perec chooses the epitome of constraint and self-denial (see above, pp. 43-47). In the confession, one of the questions raised is that of responsibility: did Gaspard choose to become a forger? Could he have decided to stop when he wanted? Is he guilty of murder? Winckler sometimes vindicates his freedom of choice and full responsibility for his actions but often insists on the fact that he was not free to decide for himself. Twice he tried to give up working for Madera, but came back to his studio, not because anybody forced him to, but because of his own cowardice. The murder is his first "demiurgical act" (Le Condottiere, f. 44), an act which takes much courage. Speaking about parachute jumping, Perec describes it as an "acte gratuit" which is nevertheless an act of confidence and optimism ("Le Saut en parachute", 1959):

> "Je crois que la psychanalyse m'avait apporté quelque chose de tout à fait différent [...] Ici c'était vraiment la confiance. C'était vraiment l'optimisme qui commençait, enfin qui devenait absolument nécessaire, c'était vraiment la confiance en la vie. [...] ce fait qu'on soit obligé de faire confiance à tout prix et qu'il ne soit pas possible de refuser quelque chose, qu'il ne soit pas possible de ... nier, qu'il ne soit pas possible de se réfugier par exemple dans le nihilisme, ou même dans l'intellectualisme, qu'il ne soit même plus possible d'intellectualiser."
>
> (Jsn, 42-43)

Madera's murder is sometimes left unjustified, a sort of "acte gratuit", sometimes given as necessary: for Gaspard to be born, Madera, the commissioner and the father figure, had to die. Significantly Madera runs Koenig's gallery, the "King's Gallery", perhaps another indication that it is, indeed, a question of succession. Similarly the murder takes place around the seventh of March, a date that corresponds to a birth, that of the author (7 March 1936), as if Perec had wanted to inscribe himself in Gaspard's re-birth.

In Paris's interpretation, Hamlet has to "break the mirror". The image of the mirror recurrs frequently in Le Condottiere: the real "Condottiere" is Antonello's

reflection; Gaspard would like himself and his false "Condottiere" to be a mirror image of Antonello (and, of course, of the real "Condottiere") but he only manages to produce his own image; in "real" life, his destiny and personality reflect Jérôme's. In Winckler's case, therefore, the question arises: which is the mirror that needs to be broken ? Gaspard, too, is at first confused and thinks that what he had to destroy was his own image reflected by his "Condottiere", hence the thought of slashing the painting with a knife (Le Condottiere, ff. 5-6). Then he seems to realize the absurdity of this act. This is why he kills Anatole Madera who, in the game of mirror reflections, is none other than Antonello da Messina (as David Bellos mentions, they have the same initials, Bellos 1992b, 56).

Another trait of Gaspard Winckler's life bears a certain resemblance to Hamlet: in Paris's tripartition of the stages of "sonliness" Hamlet is the inactive principle, the conscience. Likewise Gaspard starts off as a passive agent. However, the murder enables him to operate the transition between the conscience, or thought, and real awareness - thought accompanied by action. In a letter to François Wahl, Perec defined Le Condottiere in the following terms:

> "En gros, le livre est tout simplement l'histoire d'une prise de conscience."
>
> (Wahl corr., 11 May 1959, quoted in Bellos, GPLW, 204)

The path to awareness takes the form, as in Hamlet's case, of a struggle towards "unsonliness" (Perec refers to La Nuit, a previous, unpublished and lost text, parts of which are taken up in Le Condottiere, as "le livre de la défilialité", Corr. Lederer, [7 June 1958] quoted in Bellos, GPLW, 198).

The dilemma between acting and non-acting, being or doing, is to be found throughout Perec's oeuvre, often presented in pictorial terms. In painting, these two attitudes are embodied by Saint Jerome and Saint George: the first is the patron saint of writers and translators and signifies the contemplative mind, whilst the latter, usually represented in his combat with the dragon, stands for action (Calvino 1973, 99-111,

mentions this distinction in the chapter entitled "Anch'io voglio dire la mia", "I, too, want to tell a story"). The "Condottiere" is less saintly than Saint George but is an equally "active" figure. In Perec's works, these conflicting figures are often found together: in Jérôme's and Sylvie's ideal home are hung two reproductions, side by side: Antonello's "Saint Jerome" and Carpaccio's "Saint George" (although, here, the characters vacillate less between being and doing than between being and having, preferably without doing, hence Jérôme's homonymy with the patron saint of inactive thinkers). The same two paintings provide a source of allusions in Vme (see Appendix 1) (22). In UHQD, the hero's image in the broken mirror is one of passivity and indifference, in which he can, nonetheless, discern a slight resemblance to the portrait of "Le Condottiere" he saw at the Louvre:

> "tu vas au Louvre le dimanche, traversant sans t'arrêter toutes les salles, te postant pour finir près d'un unique tableau ou d'un unique objet: le portrait incroyablement énergique d'un homme de la Renaissance, avec une toute petite cicatrice au-dessus de la lèvre supérieure, à gauche, c'est-à-dire à gauche pour lui, à droite pour toi".
>
> (UHQD, 93)
>
> "Tu te regardes attentivement dans la glace [...] Le regard n'est nullement dévasté, il n'y a pas trace de cela, mais il n'est pas non plus enfantin, il serait plutôt incroyablement énergique."
>
> (UHQD, 133-34) (23)

Significantly, perhaps, the "Jeromeness" of some of these characters is associated with a Hamlet-like madness, intended here as the depressive aboulia of the inadequate conscience.

In Le Condottiere, what matters is not so much the transition from passivity to action, signified by Madera's murder, but the understanding of the mechanisms which allowed both the hero's initial submission and his revolt. In this sense the two epigraphs correspond to the hero's path towards awareness:

> "Comme beaucoup d'autres, j'ai fait ma descente aux enfers et, comme quelques-uns, j'en suis plus ou moins ressorti."
>
> (Leiris 1946, 28)

> "et premièrement je rappellerai dans ma mémoire quelles sont les choses que j'ai ci-devant tenues pour vraies, comme les ayant reçues par les sens, et sur quels fondements ma créance était appuyée. Et après, j'examinerai les raisons qui m'ont obligé depuis à les révoquer en doute. Et enfin je considérerai ce que j'en dois maintenant croire."
>
> (Descartes 1641, 320)

The first epigraph comes in L'Age d' homme in the section in which the author accounts for the transition from youth to maturity. The paragraph from which the quotation is taken continues:

> "En deça de cet enfer, il y a ma première jeunesse vers laquelle, depuis quelques années, je me tourne comme vers l'époque de ma vie qui fut la seule heureuse, bien que contenant déjà les éléments de sa propre désagrégation et tous les traits qui, peu à peu creusés en rides, donnent sa ressemblance au portrait."
>
> (Leiris 1946, 28)

With the second epigraph, Perec asserts the importance of an analytical process, without which the transition cannot take place. It is taken from Descartes's sixth "meditation", attempting to prove the existence of the material world through feelings, imagination, memory and reason. In this respect, the period of youth may be seen, in Le Lionnais' terms (see above p. 44), as a necessary apprenticeship. Indeed, in Winckler's case the transition point comes after twelve years of faking, the traditional length of apprenticeship for Renaissance artists.

Winckler's reasoning after the murder focuses on the understanding of his actions, attempting to find a link between the different events, or, at least, a point at which everything started to go wrong. Understanding means unravelling the intricate network of past events into a coherent order: it also means that the transition from

youth to maturity (and mastery) can take place:

> "Le Condottiere n'existe pas. Mais un homme appelé Antonello de Messine. Et comme lui tu iras vers le monde cherchant l'ordre et la cohérence. Cherchant la verité et la liberté. Dans cet au-delà accessible gît ton temps et ton espoir, ta certitude et ton expérience, ta lucidité et ta victoire."
>
> (Le Condottiere, f. 156)
> (© Estate of Georges Perec)

Le Condottiere as a realist novel

Le Condottiere, seen as the hero's path towards awareness, is similar, in principle, to Alban Berg's and Klee's "method of apocalypsis", showing the workings of the subject depicted. Moreover, Winckler insists on the chaotic nature of reality and memory, neither of which he can master, but, in the course of the novel, he acquires an understanding of the self and of the world which verges on epic significance (in Lukács's sense of the term). The process of acquiring understanding takes the form of self-analysis ("Gnothi se auton"), figuratively signified by the digging of the tunnel ("Creuser ta vie peut-être comme tu creuses ton salut", Le Condottiere, f. 31). Equally important is the exploration of past myths, in this case of the literary (and citational) kind (Shakespeare, Svevo, Joyce, Mann, etc.).

Furthermore, Winckler's inscription in his painting of "Le Condottiere" is closer to Klee's since he depicts his own fears and contradictions, and corresponds to what Perec calls "l'inscription du peintre dans l'oeuvre comme élément à son tour contradictoire" (see above, p. 43). Perec himself is not entirely absent from the work. In fact, in Winckler's life and personality may be identified vague autobiographical elements: Gaspard is abandoned by his parents, spends the war in an alpine resort, is adopted by a tutor. However, as David Bellos rightly argues, these details belong to the realm of forgery: Winckler is a false orphan (his parents are in the United States); the tutor is a false father and so forth. It follows that it is more a false image of the author that Perec inscribes in Le Condottiere, an image of his inner fears and

contradictions rather than of the real self (Bellos, GPLW, 230). Just as for any one of Perec's subsequent characters, it is pointless to ask oneself whether or not the character is an image of the author. What matters, above all, is the act of inscribing. In this, Le Condottiere is, like Klee's paintings, disturbing but extremely realistic.

From a formal point of view, a first consideration that would help to define Le Condottiere as a realist work, as the term is traditionally received, is the use of realist techniques: dialogue, regarded as the only real mimetic form (Genette, quoted by Rimmon-Kenan 1983, 108), colloquialisms, and the precision of detail. It is certain for example that a great deal of research was done by Perec on Antonello da Messina's life and painting techniques, as well as on the life and motivations of famous forgers (on which the character of Gaspard Winckler is based) (24). However, the end result bears little resemblance to the so called realist novel (Zola, Balzac, etc.) and its realism is better elicited through Paul Klee and the Partisans articles.

Perec attempts to structure the novel in a coherent way, although it is not yet the rigorous architecture of his later works. The text evolves in three parts: part one begins in medias res after Madera's murder and describes Winckler's escape, with large sections devoted to the murder but also to the hero's reflections on his life and art. The second part is the hero's confession to Streten with alternating chapters of dialogue and monologue, including an essay on Antonello da Messina. The third part, or epilogue, does not provide a solution, or a conclusion, but brings the reader to the threshold of Gaspard's new life - he may become a real painter, give up painting altogether ... what is certain is that he cannot go back to his previous way of being. The structure reproduces the three stages of the main character's "path to awareness" which correspond to both the Cartesian epigraph and, in a different order, to Jean Paris's tripartition of stages of "sonliness" as an allegory of creation (Hamlet, Laertes and Fortinbras being respectively the imagination, the decision and the execution).

On the other hand, the three parts are not well-defined as the narration does not follow a linear pattern. Furthermore, a Bergian notion of distance is introduced with the continuous shifts between first, second and third person narration and with the

frequent digressions on life, art, love, memory and so forth. Indeed there is an apparent incoherence arising from these digressions, which signify the contradictions and hesitations of the mind at work, and from the obsessional repetition of key images (the murder, related, with minor variations, at least five times, the "Condottiere", the skiing holiday in Altenberg), pointing, again, at a state of mind rather than providing a unifying thread.

A further consideration that likens Le Condottiere to modern realist works comes from Winckler's reflections on forgery. In fact, what he wanted to achieve, he says, was a portrait that would be both Antonello's and his own. He compares himself to a writer who has to reinvent a new language from given syntactic and lexical constraints. In this statement it is easy to recognise Perec's critical writings on the crisis of language and literature and the need for reinventing a new form which would be at the same time innovative and strongly anchored in tradition (L.G., 44-45, 51-56, 67-86, 114). Le Condottiere attempts to put into practice the literary theory that Perec still advocated a few years after the completion of this novel. It contains the adventure stories and the psychological analysis of 19th-century literature whilst attempting to introduce essay-like reflections on art and the creative process (25).

Like Antonello, Winckler had to refuse the easily recognisable signs of "Condottiere-ness" (the armour, the pose, etc.) and concentrate on the expression of inner strength: the eyes, the contraction of the jaw muscle and, to a lesser extent, the scar. Similarly Perec calls for a refusal of conventional myths, of chance and of over-facile explanations (L.G., 65, quoted above, p. 48). This refusal may be seen in Le Condottiere both as one of the major themes of the novel and as the formal principle that regulates its composition. In fact the murder of Madera may be seen not only as a revolt against a personal situation that has become unbearable, but also as a refusal of the established order and of the constraints imposed on artists by tradition.

Winckler's act is an act of confidence and optimism for the self, for reality and for the possibility of a "sincere" or "authentic" representation of it (26). The novel ends:

> "Peut-être chercher dans les visages l'évidente nécessité de l'homme. Peut-être chercher dans les objets et les paysages l'évidente nécessité du monde. Peut-être chercher dans les choses et dans les êtres, dans les regards et dans les mouvements l'évidente nécessité de la victoire. Peut- être. Peut-être pas peut-être. Peut-être sûrement. Sûrement sûrement. Plonger au coeur du monde. Sûrement. Dans les racines de l'inexpliqué. Dans ces racines inexplicables. Sûrement. Dans l'incomplétude du monde. Sûrement. Dans ce monde à investir et à construire. Sûrement? Plonger. Foncer. Sûrement. Vers cette perpétuelle reconquête du temps et de la vie. Vers cette lucidité immédiate. Vers cette sensibilité épanouie. Plonger. Sûrement. Plonger. Vers ce jour à mettre au monde."
>
> (Le Condottiere, ff. 156-57)
> (© Estate of Georges Perec)

In Perec's subsequent works, some of the aspects discussed in this chapter are brought to their logical conclusion, almost as if he started his career as a published author where Gaspard left off.

Most of Perec's later works are strongly anchored in reality. The observation of the real, the systematic enumeration and description of the smallest components of reality and the dissection, fragmentation and amplification of the visible world are common practice in texts like "Station Mabillon" or the "Tentatives d'épuisement" as well as in fictional works like LC or Vme. Similarly, the use of the past and tradition becomes a conscious tool of a large citational and allusional practice. Instead of being a constraint, the literary and pictorial tradition is integrated in the broader Oulipian programme which uses constraint for text generation. The set of writers and artists that Perec chose as models for his writing are thus incorporated as elements of the rigorous structure which regulates some of his works. UCDA, like Le Condottiere, fictionalizes the difference between merely copying other people's works and using sources which are part of a personal sphere. Lester Nowak first describes Kürz's "Cabinet

d'Amateur" as the painterly expression of the death of art, whereby all the artist can do is to reproduce the existing works of art ("Toute oeuvre est le miroir d'une autre", UCDA, 30). He then denies this idea in a second article, seeing Kürz's approach as a process of "incorporation".

Like Winckler, the Master Forger, Perec's aim is to achieve complete control over the means of expression and over reality. The means by which full mastery is achieved is form, which constitutes the meeting point between the self and the world, the artist and the Other (see Klee and Lukács, p. 40 above).

Perec himself conceived his literary enterprise as a "realist" one (for example, FV 1979), which he defined, in the Warwick lecture, as a "moral project" (PAP, 39). In fact Perec was never a moralist writer, giving judgments on contemporary issues and providing answers to solve the problems of the world. In his books there is always a distance between the characters and the author, so that the ending is open to the reader's personal interpretation. Furthermore, Perec's realism is far from the naturalist reproduction of the real. On the contrary, reality is continuously distorted and falsified. Yet the resemblance to the mechanisms of real life makes his forgeries extremely realistic.

Finally, the continuous blurring of degrees of reality, present throughout Perec's oeuvre, may be seen as another indication of Perec's constant concern for the notion of the real and of its representation. The incorporation not only of literary and painterly sources in his fictional texts but also of forgeries, blurs the distinction between true and false. In Le Condottiere, as well as in UCDA, some of the art works described are themselves forgeries, exhibited at the Grand Palais exhibition (27) (Fig. 14-21). Or, again, it is sometimes the description itself that is a forgery in that it is in fact a modified quotation of somebody else's description of an existing or even of a fictional painting: one example of this is the "Chevalier au bain" attributed to Giorgione by Lester Nowak in UCDA. It is in fact taken from Toute l'oeuvre peint de Giorgione, where a painting corresponding to this description is given as a probably non-existent painting attributed to Giorgione by Vasari (who is quoted in UCDA, 92).

It is compared to an existing painting (Savoldo's "Gaston de Foix", held at the Louvre) and to a probably legendary "Saint George" described by Paolo Pino. Paolo Pino, Sylvie Béguin says in the introduction to Toute l'oeuvre peint. de Giorgione, is the author of Dialogo della pittura from which the epigraph for the 1955 Giorgione exhibition in Venice is taken: "La Pittura è poesia cioè invenzione" ("Painting is poetry, that is to say invention"). It is clear therefore that the "Saint George" described by Paolo Pino is, like UCDA, a fabrication which nevertheless allows the inscription of the author. The reasons for Nowak's attribution to Giorgione are equally deceptive since the other three paintings used as a proof of the "Chevalier au bain"'s existence are taken at a second degree from a fictional work ("The Tempest" comes from Vme) or are themselves of dubious origin (a fake, "La joueuse de flûte", is mentioned by Isnard 1959 and 1980; according to the catalogue of Toute l'oeuvre peint de Giorgione, "Le Joueur de flûte" and "Le Christ soutenu par un ange" cannot be attributed to Giorgione with certainty). On the other hand, a description may be pure invention, but comply with the tradition attached to such a genre (for instance the inventory style used for some of the paintings of UCDA). In this case the forgery consists in pretending to reproduce the real while in fact producing fiction (the different kind of forgeries in Vme are discussed below, pp. 158 - 166).

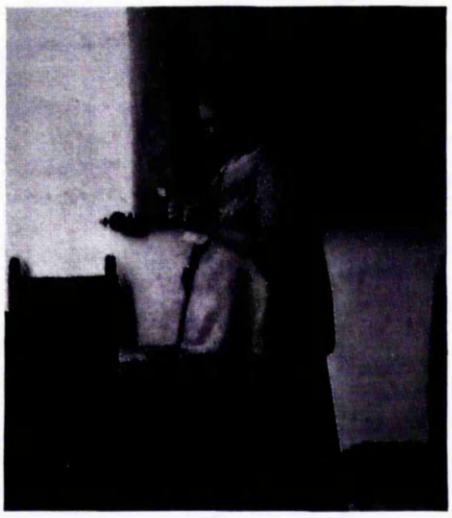


Fig. 14. Jan Vermeer, "Girl reading" (c. 1662) Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

Fig. 15. Han van Meegeren, fake Vermeer using Fig. 14. Reproduced from Isnard 1980, 103.

Fig. 16. Jean-Baptiste Chardin,
"Le Chaudron de cuivre" (c. 1733)
Paris, Musée du Louvre.

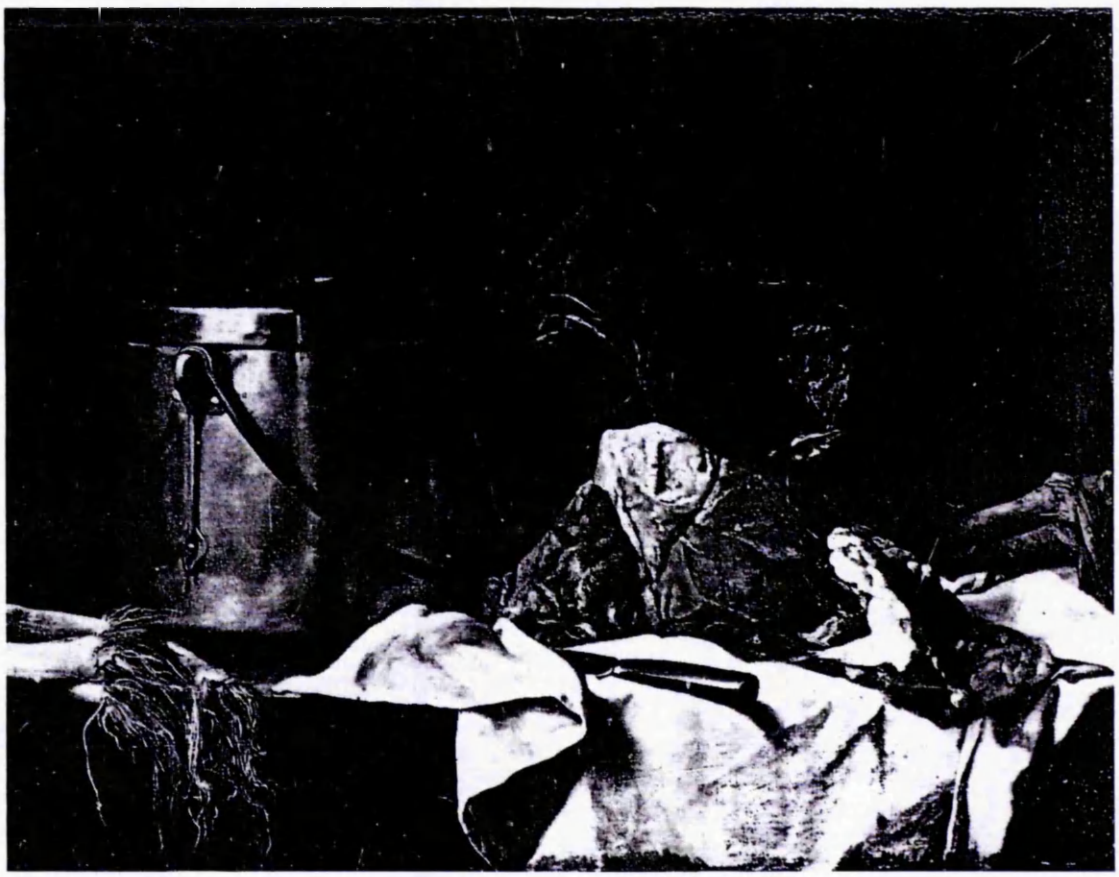


Fig. 17. Bounieu,
"Les apprêts du pot au feu" (1950s)
(fake Chardin using Fig. 16 above)
Reproduced from Isnard 1980, 118

Fig. 18. Anon
"La Joueuse de flûte". Roman fresco
London, British Museum

Fig. 19. Anon
19th century fake of "La joueuse de flûte"
Reproduced from Isnard 1980, 13.

Fig. 20. Pisanello,
"Portrait of a Principessa d'Este"
Paris, Musée du Louvre.

Fig. 21. Anon
"Portrait d'une dame noble"
(fake Pisanello using Fig. 20)
Reproduced from Isnard 1980, 23.

However, the use of verbal and pictorial forgeries does not make Perec's writing unrealistic. Since Aristotle, the debate which has occupied artists and writers is between truth-telling and fabrication. Perec reinvents the debate through the fabrication of a fictional reality which has little to do with the mimetic reproduction of the real but is, at the same time, extremely realistic.

Perec's realism in later works like Vme is based on the decomposition of reality and art (literature and painting) and on the reconstruction of it through formal structures. In this process painting is not merely a source of "inspiration" or a parallel for technical devices but it is part of the very fabric of the text.

Paintings are woven into Vme in two principal ways: as thematic subjects, described or represented in the novel itself, constituting a surprisingly extensive corpus of what will be called "visible" art; and as material incorporated by design and most often hidden from the reader's view by the operation of Perec's "kitchen" machinery. The next chapter surveys and analyses the art-content of Vme at this "ingredient" level; the following chapter considers the ekphrastic writing of Perec's novel, that is to say the quite different art work that is presented to the reader's view.

Chapter 3

"Description d'un tableau", 2 : the "ingredient" art of Vme

The formal shaping of Vme

> "Ce que je propose d'appeler le Grand Oeuvre de l'OuPeinPo, c'est un tableau, non pas un tableau peint par un peintre mais un tableau avec des lignes et des colonnes, qui ne serait pourtant pas l'équivalent de la table de Quéneiev."
>
> (Le Lionnais 1981, 10)

This introduction to the Oupeinpo's masterwork was written by Francois Le Lionnais nine years after Perec's presentation of his project to the Oulipo. As we saw in Chapter 1, Perec's first idea was to write a novel which would be the description of a painting. It is not clear that, at the time, Perec's definition of Vme as the "description d'un tableau" played on the two meanings of the French word tableau, but as word-play is a common feature of Oulipian and Perecquian writing, there is no reason to think that the definition given by Perec referred solely to painting. In Chapter 1 this statement was applied to Steinberg's drawing as an example of Perec's interest in the narrative potential of art and in what happens inside a frame. The term tableau denotes, in French, both a painting and the table of words, numbers, or signs, usually arranged in columns and lines, that allows organisation of material and data-retrieval. Similarly, the frame can also be seen as the "framework", or system, around which the text is constructed.

The underlying design of Vme has been explained many times (Perec 1979, Magné 1985b, Bellos 1987, Magné 1991, etc.) and can be summarized as follows:

The apartment-block corresponds to a 10x10 grid-square so that each room, portion of stairs, landing and basement, corresponds to one square on the grid. The order in which the rooms are described is determined by the knight's tour, a chess

problem which consists in passing through all of the squares once and once only, using the movement-pattern of the piece called the knight. In this case the chess-board is 10x10 instead of 8x8 and the knight misses one square, the 66th, so that the knight goes from square 65 to square 67 and ends on square 99 instead of 100 (see Fig. 22). This kind of breaking the rule is known as "Clinamen", from Lucretius' theory of the origins of life as the result of an error, and may be compared to Klee's statement "le génie c'est l'erreur dans le système" (see AH 1978, 22, JB 1978, 36, EP 1983, 70 and above p. 28)

.

The distribution of chapters following the knight's tour.

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
9	59	83	15	10	57	48	7	52	45	54	maids' rooms
8	97	11	58	82	16	9	46	55	6	51	maids' rooms
7	84	60	96	14	47	56	49	8	53	44	sixth floor
6	12	98	81	86	95	17	28	43	50	5	fifth floor
5	61	85	13	18	27	79	94	4	41	30	fouth floor
4	99	70	26	80	87	1	42	29	93	3	third floor
3	25	62	88	69	19	36	78	2	31	40	second floor
2	71	65	20	23	89	68	34	37	77	92	first floor
1	63	24	66*	73	35	22	90	75	39	32	ground floor
0	66*	72	64	21	67	74	38	33	91	76	cellars

Fig 22

* Number 66 occurs twice (in 0,0 and 2,1) on account of the clinamen: chapter LXVI is thus situated not in the cellars but on the ground floor).

Another piece of machinery is the Graeco-Latin bi-square of order 10. It determines the distribution of pairs of numbers (from 0 to 9) on the 10x10 grid: a number can occur only once in each column and only once in each row of the square. It also works as a magic square, that is, the numbers are arranged in such a way that the sum total of each row and each column is always the same. (A magic square was first included in a work of art by Albrecht Dürer in "Melencolia I" (Fig. 23), where it is used to inscribe in the painting its date and the solar influences under which it was painted as well as to structure its composition).

Fig. 23. Albrecht Dürer, "Melencolia I" (1514) London, Victoria and Albert Museum.

Perec then made 21 pairs of lists (= 42 lists) indicating a series of narrative or descriptive elements and used an algorithm (the pseudo-quenina) to find 21 permutations of the original distribution of the pairs of numbers on the grid (that is, 21 different bi-squares).

List of lists

Position	1	Activité	1
Nombre	2	Rôle	2
Murs	3	Sols	3
Style	4	Meubles	4
Age et sexe	5	Animaux	5
Tissus (matière)	6	Couleurs	6
Lectures	7	Musiques	7
Boissons	8	Nourritures	8
Sentiments	9	Peintures	9
Fleurs	10	Bibelots	10
Citations 1	11	Citations 2	1
3° Secteur	12	Ressort dramatique	2
Epoque	13	Lieu	3
Longeurs	14	Divers	4
Vetêments	15	Tissus (nature)	5
Accessoires	16	Bijoux	6
Tableaux	17	Livres	7
Petits meubles	18	Jeux et jouets	8
Surfaces	19	Volumes	9
Manques	20	Faux	10 *
Couples 1	21	Couples 2	

* The numbers on the right hand column refer to the grouping of lists for the determination of "gaps" and "wrongs".

In theory each chapter should include 42 elements. In practice an element can be missing (manque, "gap") or be false (faux, "wrong") - "gaps" and "wrongs" are themselves determined, to a certain extent, by the bi-square n° 20 which gives the author the choice of omitting and replacing 2 elements out of the 8 selected by the bisquare (4 for the gaps and 4 for the wrongs). For example, in Chapter LXXXVII the constraint indicates a wrong in 1, that is Perec can replace any of the elements from the lists "Position", "Activité", "Citation 1" and "Citation 2". The element chosen is the erotic activity from list n° 2 ("Activité", item n° 4), replaced by item n° 2 of the same list: "entretien". Ironically Perec replaces a faux with a forged reproduction - the element becomes an engraving entitled "Valet d'Auberge", an inexistent copy by Lebas of Chardin's painting (see below p.163).

Moreover not all chapters include all of the 42 elements: this is clear from the

cahier des charges, the checklist of items to include in each chapter (Vme preparatory works, FP 61) where Perec circled or underlined the elements as he inserted them in the final text (1).

The mechanism which allows the transition from the pre-determined set of details to the final text cannot, therefore, be reduced to a clever generative machinery whereby Perec's role is simply to find more or less complicated ways of producing a passage from set material. Such an exercise belongs to the principle of writing under constraint (producing a novel from an e-less vocabulary or poems from the eleven letters ESARTUNILOC, etc.) and could perhaps be applied, with minor variations, to most of the 42 lists. It does not account for Perec's special strategy in the use of constraint, nor for the different ways in which he intervenes in the system. Nor does it account for two pairs of lists which are of particular importance in Vme: the two lists of quotations (n° 11) and the allusions to books and paintings (n° 17).

The presence of quotations and allusions to about thirty authors belongs to a well-established Perecquian practice which has its origins, as Perec explained many times, in the feeling of "relatedness" (the "parenté enfin retrouvée", Wse, 193) with these authors - the idea borrowed from Michel Butor, of a puzzle made up of "pieces" of literature and into which Perec's own books would fit, like the missing pieces of the puzzle (2).

The quotations are mostly unacknowledged, that is they are interwoven in the text without the conventional markers (inverted commas, italics, reference to the author); often the rest of the passage is adjusted in order to insert the quotation in the most natural way, and to cover the "stitching". The simplest device is to hide the fragment in a list of heteroclite objects and/or to transfer it to a less coherent iconographic level. For instance Thomas Mann's portrait of Settembrini (Magic Mountain, 88) becomes the description of one of the old photographs kept in Gratiolet's cellar:

> "Un carton à chapeaux débordant des photographies racornies [...]: ce monsieur gracieux et brun avec une moustache noire élégamment frisée et un pantalon à

> carreaux clairs, c'est sans doute Juste Gratiolet, l'arrière-grand-père d'Olivier".
>
> (Vme, 204)

Some quotations are set out as such on the page but they are attributed to someone other than the author of the text quoted. The description of the tarand ("Tarande est un animal grand comme un jeune taureau.. telle couleur prenoit qu'elle estoit ès choses voisines", Vme, 33) comes from the second chapter of Rabelais' Le Quart Livre (572-573) describing what Pantagruel bought in Medamothi. It was Gelon the Sarmatian, to which the quotation is attributed in Vme, who sold the tarand to Pantagruel and who informed him of the creature's strange qualities. (3)

Similarly the Paintings List include artists that belong to Perec's iconic family (see pp. 83-89 below) and is used, to a certain extent, in a way that is not dissimilar from that of the authors quoted: the fragments of paintings are either inserted without a mention of the artist or the work from which they are extracted, or attributed to another painter. However, unlike the borrowed verbal material the transfer from source to text is complicated by the shift in representational mode from the pictorial space to the written page.

The distribution around the book's chapters of the "Books and Paintings" contained in list-pair 17 is as follows:

3 5	8 6	0 2	6 9	1 1	4 7	2 3	9 4	5 0	7 8
4 6	9 5	6 0	1 8	8 7	5 1	3 4	0 3	7 9	2 2
5 7	0 4	1 9	3 3	9 6	6 2	4 5	7 0	2 8	8 1
6 1	1 0	3 8	8 2	0 5	7 3	5 6	2 9	4 4	9 7
7 2	3 9	5 5	9 1	2 0	1 4	6 7	4 8	8 3	0 6
1 3	5 8	8 4	0 7	4 9	2 5	7 1	6 6	9 2	3 0
2 4	7 7	9 3	4 0	6 8	3 6	1 2	8 5	0 1	5 9
9 9	2 1	7 6	5 4	3 2	0 0	8 8	1 7	6 5	4 3
0 8	4 2	2 7	7 5	5 3	8 9	9 0	3 1	1 6	6 4
8 0	6 3	4 1	2 6	7 4	9 8	0 9	5 2	3 7	1 5

0. Lubin Baugin, "Nature morte à l'échiquier" (henceforth "Nature morte") c. 1630. Paris, Musée du Louvre. — Fig. 42
1. Jan Van Eyck, "The Marriage of the Arnolfini" (henceforth "Arnolfini") 1434. London, National Gallery. — Fig. 52
2. Antonello da Messina, "Saint Jerome in his Study" (henceforth "St. Jerome") c. 1460. London, National Gallery. — Fig. 41
3. Hans Holbein, "The Ambassadors" (henceforth "Ambassadors") 1533. London, National Gallery. — Fig. 50
4. Peter Brueghel, "The Fall of Icarus" (henceforth "Icarus") c. 1560. Bruxelles, Musées Royaux. — Fig.46
5. Diego Velasquez, "Las Meninas" (henceforth "Meninas") 1656. Madrid, Prado Museum. — Fig. 53
6. Giorgione, "The Tempest" (henceforth "Tempest") c. 1508. Venice, Gallerie dell' Accademia. — Fig. 49
7. Quentin Metsys, "The Banker and his Wife" (henceforth "Banker") 1514. Paris, Musée du Louvre. — Fig. 51
8. Vittore Carpaccio, "The Dream of Saint Ursula" (henceforth "St. Ursula") 1495. Venice, Gallerie dell' Accademia (1). — Fig. 47
9. Hieronimus Bosch, "The Hay Wagon" (henceforth "Hay Wagon") c. 1505. Madrid, Prado Museum (2). — Fig. 43

(l) Replaced in Ch XXII by "Saint George Slaying the Dragon", Venice, Scuola San Giorgio degli Schiavoni. (Fig. 48)
(2) Replaced in Ch. LXXXVIII by the triptych "Epiphany", Madrid, Prado Museum. (Fig. 45)

What this number-device means is that in Chapter I (on grid-square 4,5 - see Fig. 22 above) there should be an allusion to "Saint Jerome" and a reference to Harry Mathews' s Conversions (item n° 5 of the Books List).

For each painting Perec established a list of details to insert in the appropriate chapters. Since each painting occurs in the bi-square ten times, the sub-list of details should include ten items. In fact for only four of the paintings is there a full list: The "Arnolfini", the "Tempest", the "Banker" and the "Nature morte".

For three paintings he uses only nine details: for "Saint Ursula", because Chapter LXVI, which should contain the allusion, is missing; for "Icarus" and the "Hay Wagon", because of a programmed "gap" (respectively in Chapters XCII and V) (4). The sub-list for the "Meninas" has only eight elements, the missing two being replaced by a detail from "Saint Jerome" (Ch. XXXIII) and one from the "Ambassadors" (Ch. XLV). Antonello and Holbein are privileged as, beside the two additions mentioned above, they have a "supplement" in Chapter XLIV, that is these two sub-lists have twelve elements instead of ten (the "lion" from "Saint Jerome" is also used twice in Chapters LI and LIX).

Perec's intervention in the system of constraints is such that a schematic case study of how the details are inserted would be extremely reductive and of marginal interest. However, it may be useful to mention a few instances showing the implementation of the constraint and its distortion (5).

An element from a painting can be simply inserted in the text, transcribing a non-verbal fragment into a verbal one. This element can be a simple visual fragment of the painting (the orange on the window-sill of Van Eyck's painting found on Gratiolet's table in Ch. LXXXII or the Arnolfini's small curly-haired spaniel in Ch. LXXIX).

But the transcription from non-verbal to verbal is not always a faithful one as details are modified to fit in, either with a character or a story or to include elements from one or more other lists. One modification consists in reifying humans or animals in the painting so that, for example, "Saint Jerome"'s lion becomes a statue on which Hutting sits while painting (Ch. LI and LIX); Velasquez's self-portait and Bosch's

representation of death become ornaments in Rorschash's apartment (Ch. XIII and XVIII) while the infant Margarita portrayed in the "Meninas" is transformed into the name of an archipelago.

Another type of modification consists in a change of emphasis between the role of the detail in the painting and the role it assumes in the allusion. Often their role is minimized: Saint Jerome's zucchetto, used conventionally as an attribute of the saint, becomes a handkerchief on a worker's head (Ch. XXI); Baugin's chess-board, which stands for chance in life, is transformed into a small travelling chess-board found on the stairs (Ch. LXVIII); the broken column in the "Tempest" to which is attached the legend of Io's expulsion from Olympus, becomes, ironically, an umbrella-stand on the sixth floor landing (Ch. LXVI). Mirrors are important signifiers of the artist's presence in his work and are used in a very special way by Van Eyck, Velasquez and Metsys. These too are introduced as "insignificant" details - except Metsys' mirror which becomes no less than Winckler's witches' mirrors.

On the other hand the role of the fragment is sometimes overemphasized by simple duplication (there is only one stool in Carpaccio's painting, two in Chapter XXVI; only one rosemary plant in Antonello's, two in Chapter XXVII), or by addition of significant details, usually determined by another constraint. The detail can also be privileged in so far as it contains an inscription of the author. When, for example, Perec describes the emblem of Saint Michael's cross (Ch. LXXXI) not as a skull but as a combat between the Archangel and the Dragon, we immediately think of another combat with the dragon, that of Saint George (a painting by Carpaccio and the trade-mark for James Sherwood's cough pastils in Ch. XXII) (6).

The insertion becomes more complex when a pictorial element provides a narrative element as in the case of Carel van Loorens' story (Ch. LXXVIII), triggered off by the wooden patten of the "Arnolfini".

Moreover, the details chosen are not all visible in the paintings. A detail can come from Perec's knowledge of the painting or of the artist. For instance, the description of one of Olivia Norwell's husbands (Ch. LXXIX): "un jeune Italien venu

leur vendre une rose à Bruges", comes from the fact that Giovanni (Jean) Arnolfini was also known as Jean of Bruges, from the town in which he lived and worked; the allusion to Lord Radnor and Longford Castle in Chapter III refers to the history of the painting. The owner of the "Ambassadors", before it was acquired by the National Gallery, was the fifth Earl of Radnor.

Perec also uses the intrinsic intertextuality of some of the paintings to quote from written sources inscribed in, or inspired by, the painting (7). In this case the detail is purely verbal. The Latin dictum on the magazine held by the man in the stairs (Ch. XLII) appeared on the frame of the "Banker". But the trick is even more devious than that: since the dictum is no longer visible on the frame, Perec has taken it solely from a critical work on the painting (Verscharen's "Souplesse de touche et grâce de coloration" in Chefs d'oeuvres de l'art, n° 118, unpaged) (8). Similarly, Luther's choral song in Chapter XLV focuses on the written detail of the painting and it is also a quotation of a critical essay on Holbein by Michel Butor (1968, 33-41) (9).

Some allusions are "artificially" verbal because the painting is twice removed from the allusion. This is the case of Giorgione's "Tempest". The painting describes the story of Io turned into a white heifer. The atmosphere of danger is conveyed by the stormy sky but there is no evidence, in the myth or in the painting, that the tempest involves a sea-storm. However, for Perec, these two are associated, as can be seen from the use he makes of the chosen details:

Ch. XXIX: "Tempesta di mare", concerto by Vivaldi.

Ch. LXXII: Bartlebooth's survival kit in case of a ship-wreck.

Ch. XCIV: Caliban, the name on a label of a raincoat found in the stairs, is a character from Shakespeare's Tempest: the allusion is doubly associated with water because Shakespeare's play deals with a sea-storm and also because Caliban is associated with mustiness.

In this case Giorgione's painting is no longer the source of the allusion but only the inspiration of a process of lateral thinking based on language. (This is true also for Brueghel's "Icarus" identified with Verne's Ile mystérieuse because of the island in the

background).

Sometimes the insertion of the detail involves a shift in the level of representation. The detail can thus produce a visual image (the portrait on Bartlebooth's bedside table in Ch. XCIX being that of Giovanni Arnolfini) or it can visualize "mental" images such as memories, forethoughts and dreams (Mademoiselle Crespi's dream in Ch. XVI or Valène's image of the basement underworld in Ch. LXXIV).

The use of mise en abyme - the image within the image - is a useful device to insert details from 15th-18th-century paintings into the lives of 20th-century characters and one that suits the design of a novel built on different levels or "frames".

Finally, the visual quotation can refer not so much to a single detail but to a technique used by the painter (Antonello's attention for detail comes through Marguerite Winckler's miniature - Ch. LIII - reproducing the view from the window of the saint's study in a 4x3 cm frame), or the structure of the painting : Hutting (Ch. LIX) portrays his Japanese client in exactly the same pose as Holbein's "Ambassadors"; other examples are the Beaumonts' wedding photograph (Ch. LXXVI), taken from the "Arnolfini", Mademoiselle Crespi's dream (Ch. XVI), modelled on "Saint Ursula"'s, the description of the Plassaert (Ch. LIV) which comes from the "Banker" (the latter not only have the same pose but also the same personality as Perec refers to them in the preparatory notes (FP 111,33,3d) as "L'Usurier et sa femme").

In the end, what matters is less the mechanism that regulates the insertion of details than Perec's choice of pictorial fragments and the transformations to which they are subjected.

From the examples given, it is clear that the fragments chosen are not always the most important ones. For instance in Van Eyck's painting he leaves out the mirror which, alone, has given rise to numerous pages of art criticism. Secondly, the element can induce language-based transformations or it can prompt fabulations whereby a whole story arises from a single detail (Carel van Loorens) or, vice versa, a small detail can be produced by a story attached to the painting (Holbein's globe or Velasquez's

mirror). Thirdly, the insertion of details into another painting serves the double purpose of justifying the presence of the detail in the novel, and of blurring further the distinction between real and false.

As discussed earlier for the frame, the different degrees of mise en abyme in the text make it difficult for the reader to remember at which level of representation he is. When a pictorial fragment is inserted in the space of a painting, by definition the realm of the imaginary, the reader may find echoes of "real" paintings in it. In this case the detail authenticates the fiction (it comes from a real painting, therefore it exists) and, paradoxically, it also points to the fact that reality is not the real but its representation.

In other words the tableau of formal constraints functions as the tableau painted by Steinberg, combining Perec the narrator with Perec the falsifier and the "doer of fiction". It also reflects the author's main fields of writing: the "infra-ordinary", story-telling, Oulipian verbal games. But, like Steinberg's unruly artist, Perec does not blindly obey the rules and regulations dictated by the formal constraint. His continuous bending of the rule expresses both his thoughts on constraint and freedom and his attitude towards the reader who, like puzzle-solvers, is constantly made to feel that there is a structure behind it all but, thanks to the author's liberties, cannot quite grasp it.

The place of art in the tableau

An inventory of the different ways in which pictorial fragments from a given list are inserted in the text does not explain why Perec places a list of paintings beside a list of books. Nor does it explain why he chose these paintings and not others (by, for example, Memling, Cranach, Chardin, etc.).

The reasons underlying Perec's choice of paintings are manifold and cannot be exhaustively explained, but a partial answer can be found in Perec's approach to language and constraint.

In the first instance, some paintings might have been chosen because they were

paintings which he knew and liked, and of which he had reproductions near at hand. In fact for some of these paintings it is possible to trace, if not the beginning, at least a point in time at which Perec showed some interest in them: Antonello was one of his favourite painters since 1957-59 (see Chapter 2 above), and is mentioned as one of the painters he "likes" in 1979. "Saint Jerome" was shown to him by an artist friend, Pierre Getzler, after 1959 and is described in Eses (pp. 117-118); it was an other friend, in the same period, who showed him Baugin's "Nature morte", a reproduction of which decorated his room in the army camp of Pau (10); it is also described in detail in L'Espace et le regard (1965) by Jean Paris, one of Perec's early mentors; a post-card of Carpaccio's "Saint Ursula" was probably stuck on the wall of one of his rooms, as the following passage seems to suggest:

> "A partir de quand un lieu devient-il vraiment vôtre? [...] Est-ce quand on a punaisé au mur une vieille carte postale représentant Le Songe de Sainte Ursule de Carpaccio?"
>
> (Eses, 36)

Breughel's "Icarus" is again mentioned amongst Perec's "likes and dislikes" (1979). Giorgione's "Tempest", as well as a number of others on the Paintings List, can be explained through another painting: Leonardo's "Mona Lisa", of which Perec says:

> "Ce qui me plaît surtout dans la Joconde, c'est d'abord qu'on ait pu donner quelques centaines d'explications sur son sourire, dont un nombre non négligeable de thèses de médecine [...], ensuite et surtout, que, depuis plusieurs années, les travaux de jocondologie et de jocondoclastie aient fait des progrès suffisamment foudroyants pour rendre inutile toute contemplation de l'original: la Joconde tient maintenant dans la peinture à peu près le rôle que la vache Io tient dans les mots croisés, ce qui n'est vraiment que justice si l'on considère la cécité à peu près totale à laquelle on est condamné en face du tableau."
>
> (PB 1971, 113)

This statement illustrates at least two aspects which make the choice of paintings

pertinent to Vme. Most of the paintings chosen are "mystery" paintings which have given rise to numerous analytical studies of this kind and reproductions can be easily found in printed or audio-visual form to illustrate a wide variety of subjects (a computerised version of "The Banker" is used on the News to introduce the stock exchange section). Although Perec certainly looked closely at some of the originals (especially those located in the Louvre or in the National Gallery), he relied on reproductions when he introduced some of the details in Vme. Art book series such as Hachette's Chefs-d'oeuvre de l'art or Flammarion's Tout l'oeuvre peint de... contain a reproduction of the painting and of a number of details, magnified to a visible size. With a few exceptions, Perec had reproductions of the paintings already pre-cut in significant details. Sometimes the allusion to a visual detail corresponds also to a (modified) quotation from the same source (11).

The difference between inserting a pictorial fragment of a painting and describing a detail from a reproduction stuck on a wall or placed on his desk is that they are two quite separate yet similar gestures. One of the non-algorithmic constraints of Vme is the use of "special documents" - objects, postcards, pamphlets, etc. - which he found around him or received during the composition of the novel (12). With the use of the reproduction the painting ceases to be a work or art and becomes a familiar object. In this sense, the allusion is closer to both Perec's idea of citational literature (borrowing from a "family" of authors) and to the systematic description of objects and places around him ("Notes concernant les objets qui sont sur ma table de travail", "Station Mabillon", etc.).

Giorgione's "Tempest", for instance, is a painting he probably saw in Venice (during one of his visits in 1967 or 1975) but also, through Io, it becomes an everyday object that can be found in cross-words (a weekly activity for Perec from 1976).

Secondly, the reason for Perec's choice of some of the paintings might have been of a linguistic or narrative kind. Baugin's "Nature morte à l'échiquier" is an obvious choice for a novel in which the description of objects occupies such an important place and which uses the knight's tour (13). The "Tempest", as we have

seen, was probably in part chosen because of its title (14); the "Ambassadors" and the "Meninas" for the narrative potential attached to them.

Finally it seems odd that a 20th-century author, who moved in the artistic milieu of his time, would choose 14th-18th-century artists: the choice seems even odder in comparison with Perec's literary inscriptions. In fact the list of "Quotations" and "Allusions" to books starts almost where the Paintings List ends: all but four of the authors quoted (Arthurian romance, Rabelais, Shakespeare, Sterne) are 19th and 20th-century writers. The question as to why Perec chose these authors and not others outreaches the scope of this study. As for the ten paintings, it is possible to find more than one explanation to justify Perec's choice.

Perec once said to a friend that one of the reasons why he liked Renaissance painters was that they were subject to a certain number of constraints but used them to experiment with form (15).

In the Renaissance, subject came first. Artists received commissions to paint religious subjects for churches or portraits of important local figures and set out to fulfil their task to the best of their abilities. Symbols and objects to be included in the painting were also suggested by the commissioner and/or by the iconographical tradition attached to the subject.

A further constraint supervened with the new discoveries in the fields of anatomy and optics. Artists like Alberti and Leonardo da Vinci sought to represent the real as precisely as possible, and codified the "principles" of representation in rules that were to be used in art until the 19th century. Yet artists of this period produced a wide variety of paintings and always found new solutions to depict the given subject in a way that complied with the constraint and that was, at the same time, very personal. In this sense, the constraint acted as a creative force. This remark can be applied to all of the artists on Perec's list even though they are not all Renaissance artists.

Another consideration that would explain Perec's attraction to this period of Art History is that, at the time, art was a trade handed down from master to apprentice. It is only in the 19th century that art became a subject taught in academies and artists

became free to choose the subject of their paintings as well as the mode of representation. It is only then that the distinction between art with a capital A and craft emerges. Perec often compared himself to a craftsman building sentences out of letters and words (BN 1977, JR 1979, 139, KM 1981). It is not surprising that two of the artistic movements in which he showed some interest do not discriminate between art and craft: 15th-18th-century painting and hyper-realists who made extensive use of "commercial" art (advertising, graphic art, photography).

Perec's use of constraint can be compared to that of Renaissance craftsmen. Perec himself often said that constraint acted as a liberating force which allowed him to overcome self-censorship and have a direct access to the sub conscious (in poetry) or to fiction (BN 1977, CB 1977, 21, GC 1978, 74, JB 1978, 38, OB 1981, 50).

In some of Perec's works the constraint is also the subject of the novel, somewhat like those Renaissance paintings which portray the commissioner: in La Disparition, for instance, and, to a certain extent, in Vme where, as Harry Mathews points out (OB 1981, 54), Perec represents three experiences of constraints: Bartlebooth's self-imposed life-project, Valène's painting, which follows much the same constraints as those which regulate the novel, and Gaspard Winckler, who uses the constraint to wreak vengeance over his commissioner. The latter is the one that comes closest to genius precisely because, like the author, he uses the constraint to his own ends. (16)

In Vme the description of characters, objects and settings is determined in part by the cahier des charges which establishes the number and role of the people in a room, their age and sex, their clothes, including fashion accessories, their pose and activity, their feelings and motives (the "ressort dramatique"), the setting in which they move (walls, furniture, ornaments, etc.). Moreover, even the lists which should not produce objects or characters - Quotations, Paintings, etc - can provide such elements: the ice-bucket on page 63 is an allusion to Bosch (the monk in the foreground), Madame de Beaumont's dressing gown on page 229 is determined by the lists "Quotation 1" and "Quotation 2": Sterne's Tristam Shandy (vol. II, p. 76) is the source

of "une robe de chambre en satin vert", Harry Mathews' Tlooth provides "le symbole représentant aux cartes le pique" (VCMA, 48).

However, like Renaissance artists, Perec uses the constraint to reinvent a description of character and objects that is different from both the 19th-century "psychological" studies and from the Nouveau Roman's art for art's sake.

But, before proceeding to a comparative study of the ten paintings and of the way in which themes and techniques are reflected in Perec's writing, a further point must be made. Perec's use of painting goes far beyond the random choice of paintings, from a given period, which best suit the purpose of "generating machines". In fact, the ten paintings constitute a compact and coherent group, an "iconic family" which, like its literary counterpart, is less an inheritance than a set of affiliations established consciously on the basis of affinities in method and aim.

Perec's ten painters, each of whom relates in some way to the author, also constitute a network between themselves in which many reciprocal influences and correspondences can be found. For instance, Van Eyck's "Arnolfini" is the source for Velasquez's "Meninas" (Muller 1976, 220) and also for the use of aerial perspecitve in Antonello's "Saint Jerôme" (Battisti 1985, 241); Antonello, in his turn, learnt aerial perspective from Petrus Christus, whose painting, "Saint Eloy", inspired Metsys' "Banker" (Rivers 1984, 108)... But connections of that kind can be found between almost any ten well-known paintings. The issue here is to discover and explain features which both connect Perec's ten art works to each other and also relate them to Vme.

The dominant image, common to almost all the paintings, is that of death and of the passing of time - the explicit death of Icarus or the many allusions inscribed by Carpaccio, Holbein, Van Eyck, etc. Another common denominator may be identified in the theme of voyage: characters are portrayed in a place other than their native towns (the Arnolfini in Bruges, Georges de Selves in England and so on) or embark in perilous journeys (Saint Ursula, Io, Icarus). It is possible here to see two of the major themes of Vme, a novel centred on Bartlebooth's travels and, above all, on his death. In

general, the themes of voyage and death are very important for a number of characters.

The potential of this type of search for "itineraries", or elements linking the ten paintings and Perec's novel is endless. However, some of these elements seem particularly relevant to Vme. These may be divided, for convenience sake, into three fields:

1. Types, classes and conventions of paintings: portraits (court, narrative, genre), still lifes, landscapes:
Perec's use of these types: the treatment of character, objects and setting. (Discussed in this chapter).

2. Symbolism borrowed from other media: the use of writing in painting (Holbein, Carpaccio, Van Eyck) and the use of painting in writing (Perec's ekphrastic descriptions, discussed in Chapter 4).

3. Ways of "looking" at the real and at the painting: the artist's eye and the use of different kinds of perspective. Perec's use of perspective and optical illusion as correlates of textual practices. (Discussed in Chapter 5)

One more field could be added to the above list, although it applies equally to artists other than the ten painters considered here: the issue of composition and the challenge of fragmentation, which was a crucial point for Alberti in the Renaissance but also for more modern artists such as Klee or Japanese scroll painters. This issue will be discussed in Chapter 5 with reference to Perec's notion of space and time.

(a) Types of paintings used as ingredient art

Portraits

The genre of portraiture requires, by definition, a life-like resemblance to the person portrayed. The term comes from the latin pro-traho, drawing lines "in the place of" (the Italian "ritratto" and the Spanish "retrato" which come from re-traho, drawing lines "again", from memory, denote a different procedure but a similar attitude towards the idea of likeness). Within this general definition we can distinguish between court, narrative and genre portraits for which the resemblance is, respectively, to a particular person, to a situation or an event, or to a type.

In fiction there is no notion of likeness precisely because the characters portrayed are imaginary. Although Vme contains a number of real characters (Guyomard, Scipion, etc.) these are not really described, or "portrayed". The question of likeness, therefore, cannot be applied. On the other hand the novel contains a number of characters borrowed from other books: Bartlebooth is a cross between Melville's Bartleby and Valery Larbaud's Barnabooth, Grégoire Simpson comes from Kafka's Metamorphosis; Kafka (A Fasting Artist) is again the source for the trapeze artist in Chapter XIII; Rorschash's attempt to make money by importing sea-shells from Africa fails because somebody else, in a novel by Harry Mathews, had done it before him (PL 1978).

In this sense Perec's approach is similar to that of a portrait artist, since borrowing characters is a sort of celebration of the books and authors he admired, and appeals to the reader because, now and again, he thinks he can recognise a character from another book.

A second remark that applies to portraits as a genre, is that they require a competent viewer, even more so when the "reading" of the painting depends on the pose (the eyes, whether it is a frontal portrait or a profile, etc.) and on the presence of qualifying objects which throw light on the identity and personality of the model.

The pose and, in particular, whether the model is portrayed frontally or in profile, plays an important role in the relationship between the artist, his model and the

viewer. The frontal portrait has its origins in the myth of Narcissus. It denotes self-contemplation but also contemplation of the other (Calabrese 1985, 115); the model looks at the viewer and establishes a dialogue with him. The profile derives from a different myth: the girl drawing the silhouette of her beloved from a shadow cast by him on the wall (a story that was first chronicled by Pliny in The Natural History, Ch. 47, p. 283). The portrait is intended to be kept as a memento of their love (Calabrese 1985, 115). It involves memory and the past. Another myth associated with the profile is that of power or worthiness: Roman emperors' profiles were represented on gold coins to signify their power or to commemorate their sovereignty.

Unlike the frontal portrait, the profile cuts out any communication with the viewer: the model looks at a point within or without the painting but outside the onlooker's visual field.

Amongst the eight portraits on Perec's list the three "court portraits" ("Arnolfini", "Ambassadors", "Meninas") are frontal and discursive while the narrative and genre ones ("Saint Ursula", "Icarus", "Saint Jerome", "Banker" (17), "Tempest") are profile and non-discursive.

Jean Paris' work on space and glance (1965), examines the different ways in which artists and their models communicate with the recipient in art and literature. His book can be used as an "intertext" for understanding Perec's very`special way of communicating with his reader. Paris argues that, in writing, the frontal portrait corresponds to the first person narration, while the profile corresponds to the third person.

The profile, or third person, would be in keeping with the narrative conceit of Vme, based on Valène's memory of the building and its inhabitants. The profile, Jean Paris goes on to explain, is an attempt to reify human beings:

> "Le profil [...] offre au peintre une tentation: saisir autrui dans sa docilité de chose et de concept, l'immobiliser en un espace sans partage où son regard se perd avec la liberté."
>
> (Paris 1965, 116)

The fixity of the pose and the use of profile in Vme would seem to indicate that characters are indeed still lifes. Perec, though, uses other ways of giving "life" to his characters and of establishing a dialogue with the reader.

The novel is narrated mostly in the third person singular but there are instances in which the narration shifts to the first person plural. Bernard Magné (1989b) analyses these instances and suggests that the speaking "we" of Vme is both an "I" (author) + a "he" (narrator) and "I" + a "you" (reader). In pictorial terms this would result in the juxtaposition of a frontal portrait and a profile (the "he") and/or a 3/4 portrait (the "you"), a juxtapostion that is reminiscent of the caricature by W.E. Hill:

> "qui représente *en même temps* une jeune et une vieille femme, l'oreille, la joue, le collier de la jeune étant respectivement un oeil, le nez et la bouche de la vieille, la vieille étant de profil en gros plan et la jeune de trois quarts dos cadrée à mi- épaule".
>
> (Vme, 415)

Like this caricature, Perec's pronominal shifts make the mode of narration neither discursive nor non-discursive. The author/narrator stands at the intersection between the two, in a space wherein the characters are neither typified still lifes (as in genre pictures) nor "court" models addressing themselves directly to the reader. The communication between author and reader takes the form of Perec's often mentioned "regard oblique" (see, for example, PF 1979, 47 or P/C, 43-58 and 115).

Still Lifes

Portraits often include objects to elucidate an aspect of the model's life and personality. Objects, in this case, are just as important as individuals and are depicted with the same attention to detail and likeness (Holbein's "Ambassadors" or Antonello's "Saint Jerome"). It is only in the second half of the 17th century that objects begin to be painted in absentia of the model. After the Reformation, when religious paintings virtually disappeared from the Protestant North, still lifes became very popular: the new class of bourgeois preferred paintings depicting objects from ordinary life to the

rhetoric of legends and proverbs.

In French and Italian the denomination of this genre ("Nature morte", "natura morta") has connotations of death that were not present in the original Flemish term ("vie coye") nor in the subsequent denominations used in German ("Still-leben") or in English ("Still life"). In the first instance the term refers to a lifelessness in the objects depicted; in the second it is not the object that is dead (as the use of the word "life" seems to indicate), it is time that has stopped (18). The objects have been fixed in one particular moment which, paradoxically, is both still (T=0) and lasting (T= ∞) as the painter has chosen one moment to represent eternity (Calabrese 1985, 144-145). This is even clearer in the case of vanitas where every object contains within itself, or in association with the others, the image of death and of the passing of time. It usually consists of objects linked with human activities (science and humanities; money and power; pleasure, in the form of the five senses) juxtaposed with images of death (a skull) or of the passing of time (clocks, hour-glasses). In this sense the still life is the logical development of the tradition going from "Saint Jerome" to Metsys' "Banker" or Petrus Cristus' "Saint Eloy" which play on the contrast between earthly activities and devotion, that is to say between life on earth and the hereafter.

The only still life on Perec's list - Baugin's "Nature morte" (Fig. 42) - is a particular kind of vanitas, vaguely based on the five senses. Of the ten elements depicted, seven refer to four senses: the bread and the wine to the sense of taste, the flowers to smell, the mandolin and the score to hearing, the smoothness of the vase and the crystal glass to touch (although this is usually represented through the contrast rough/smooth, hard/soft, etc.). A closed purse stands for the attachment to earthly possessions. Sight, conventionally signified in this genre by a mirror or, if intended as perception of the passing of time, by the usual clock or hour-glass is not represented in this painting. Similarly, we do not have the traditional symbols of death but only vague allusions : the mandolin facing downwards could be a reference to silence and therefore an allusion to death; the bread and the wine, an allusion to Christ's sacrifice.

Jean Paris (1965, 132-134) gives an unusual interpretation of this

painting, and one that could also be applied to Perec's description of objects in Vme. According to Jean Paris the rigorous order of the composition, emphasized by the presence of the chess-board, is the expression of a Cartesian mind that leaves nothing unexplained. Devoid of any possible mystery, the objects are fixed in a lifeless existence that nobody will come to disturb. This is true also of those objects which could add a touch of life to the composition - no-one will ever open the purse, cut the bread or play the mandolin. But within this order we find that some objects are redundant, having the same symbolic value as others, some symbols are missing (sight, death) and that nothing links these objects together , except chance, signified by the set of cards.

Landscapes

Like still lifes landscapes become elements in their own right in the second half of the 17th century. Up to then landscape was painted "around" the models as a more or less significant decorative element.

In the Paintings List of Vme, none of the paintings represent a landscape on its own but for two of the paintings ("Saint Jerome", the "Banker") the landscape is used as a decorative element in opposition or in accordance with the message conveyed; in three (the "Hay Wagon", "Icarus", the "Tempest") it plays an important part.

In Antonello's "Saint Jerome" (Fig. 41) the landscape visible from the two side-windows and the sky of the top window give more depth to the painting and is an expression of Antonello's attention for detail and of his talent as a miniaturist. A more interesting case is the reflection in the mirror of Metsys' "Banker" (Fig. 51): the man reading the Bible in front of a church. By depicting in a mirror a space that is necessarily placed outside the painting Metsys puts two possible alternatives side by side: the Banker's attachment to money and devotion. The viewer perceives the two alternatives almost simultaneously (the mirror is turned towards him): the Banker, on the contrary, would have to lift his eyes from the balance to face the church, an effort that he does not seem to want to make.

Bosch and Brueghel use landscape to confirm or deny the message: with Breughel, in particular, the landscape becomes a protagonist. "Icarus" evolves around two main poles: on one side, the peaceful pastoral scene peopled by the peasants working; on the other, the mysterious and menacing island where Icarus was imprisoned.

Giorgione, considered one of the first landscape artists (Gombrich 1989, 239-40), is the only painter on Perec's list who uses landscape in a constructive and deceptive way. Not only is the landscape transformed by the symbolism in itinerary - all the places through which Io has travelled - but also it is used to create an effect of mystery. First of all, nature, even in this idyllic representation, can hide threats (the snake). Secondly, behind the apparent calmness of the scene, an alarming atmospheric phenomenon is about to take place. In the end, the landscape tells us just as much as the models themselves, provided that we look beyond the apparent.

b) Classes and conventions in portrait painting.

The Court portrait

The three court portraits included in Perec's list - Jan Van Eyck, "Arnolfini", Diego Velasquez, "Meninas", Hans Holbein, "Ambassadors" - are all life-like portraits of famous people, although the means by which each painting is made to look life-like are different in each case.

The "Arnolfini" (Fig. 52) is the portrait of Giovannni Arnolfini, a successful businessman from Lucca, who was well-established in Bruges (1420-1472) and of his wife Giovanna Cenami* (19). All the details in the painting point to marriage (the orange, the candle, Giovanni Arnolfini's fide levata), faithfulness (the dog), fertility (the statue of Saint Margaret, patron saint of future mothers) and to honest work: the brush, signifying the cleanliness of the house, the shoes on the floor, taken off as a sign of respect. Giovanni Arnolfini's narrow eyes, on the contrary, emphasize the shrewdness and craftiness of his business mind. In the background, Van Eyck places a mirror, reflecting the image of four people: the Arnolfini, seen from the back and two

more people facing them - either the two witnesses of the wedding or the viewers of the painting. The frame of the mirror is an exercise in virtuosity depicting in minute detail ten moments of the passion of Christ (Fig. 25), a self-reference to remind the viewer of Van Eyck's miniaturist talent (he was one of the authors of the Book of Hours for the Duke of Berry) and of his other works, mostly of religious inspiration.

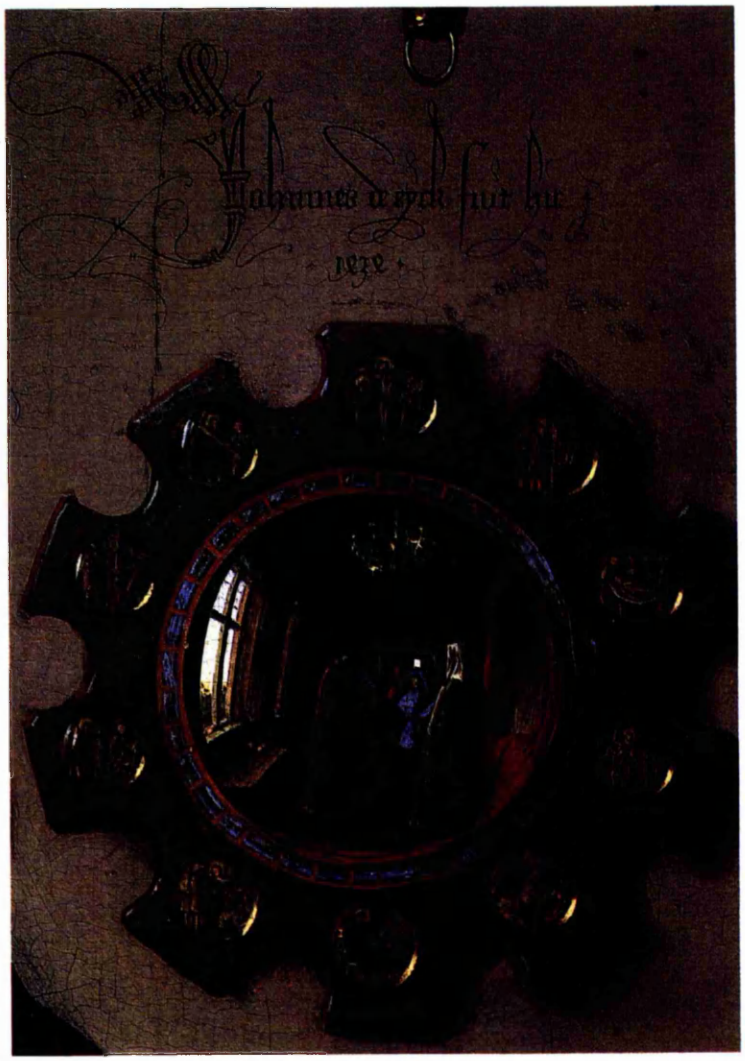


Fig. 25. Jan van Eyck,
"The Marriage of the Arnolfini" (detail)

Velasquez's "Meninas" (Fig. 53) is modelled on the "Arnolfini" (Muller 1976, 220) (20). The ostensible subject matter of the painting is the portrait of the infanta Margarita and her maids. The painter figures in the canvas, to one side of the group, facing a large canvas which is turned away from the viewer. In the painting, Velasquez does not look at the infanta Margarita, as one would expect, but towards the viewer. Margarita herself does not look at the painter, nor at the maid who seems to have just been talking to her and to be waiting for an answer, but, like Velasquez, she focuses her attention on a point outside the painting. In the background we again have a mirror, reflecting the image of two people, either the King and the Queen or the viewers.

Velasquez establishes a system of visual exchanges between the painter, his models and the viewer that deceives all expectations. The inscription of the painter and of the mirror makes it difficult to decide what Velasquez intended to portray: is he painting the infanta Margarita looking at her parents or is he painting the royal couple looking at their daughter? Or is he just painting himself, the artist at work? The mystery is enhanced by the canvas in front of him, hidden from us, and by the man in the background (believed to be Joseph Nieto*, an ambassador of the King) placed in such a way that it is impossible to say whether he is coming into the scene or going out of it. In the end, the painting is less about representing a group of people than about the art of painting, raising questions about the power of the painter and the viewer's perception.

Holbein's "Ambassadors" (Fig. 50) presents the same secret construction (21). It is one of the first paintings of a genre, the Vexiebilder, that was to become very popular in Northern Europe and which expresses the idea that art is a mask that needs to be unveiled in order to reach the truth - a concept that is signified in the painting by the closed curtain, a conventional symbol of veiled truth. Omar Calabrese, amongst others, has identified some of the strategies used by Holbein to fulfil the constraint imposed by the commissioner and to inscribe in the painting allusions to the historical and political situation of the time, as well as hidden self-references.

The "Ambassadors" is the portrait of Jean de Dinteville* (on the left), Lord of Polisy and ambassador of François I at the court of Henry VIII, and of Georges de

Selve (on the right), Bishop of Lavaur (Tarn) (22). The idea of the painting is to celebrate an alliance between the two ambassadors who, significantly, are portayed standing on an exact replica of the floor of Westminster Abbey, the symbol of political and religious England. Holbein, though, introduces some elements of doubt: the lute has a broken string - the harmony symbolized by its presence in the painting is thus undermined; its empty case points to silence; Georges de Selve's portrait seems unfinished as if he had had to leave before the completion of the painting.

The 'secret' on which the painting is based comes from the use of two different mechanisms of illusion: on the one hand, the extremely precise representation of people and objects, where every detail contains within itself the clue for its decipherment; on the other, the insertion, in the foreground, of a strange object (Fig. 26). At first glance, the anamorphic skull defies and intrigues the viewer by withholding information on one point. Once seen, it gives the painting an entirely new meaning. The detail is one of the allusions to death (there are three skulls in the painting, as well as other allusions) but it is also a self-reference - an expression of Holbein's constant concern for death and a pun on his name: Hol-bein meaning "hollow bone" (or "skull") in German.

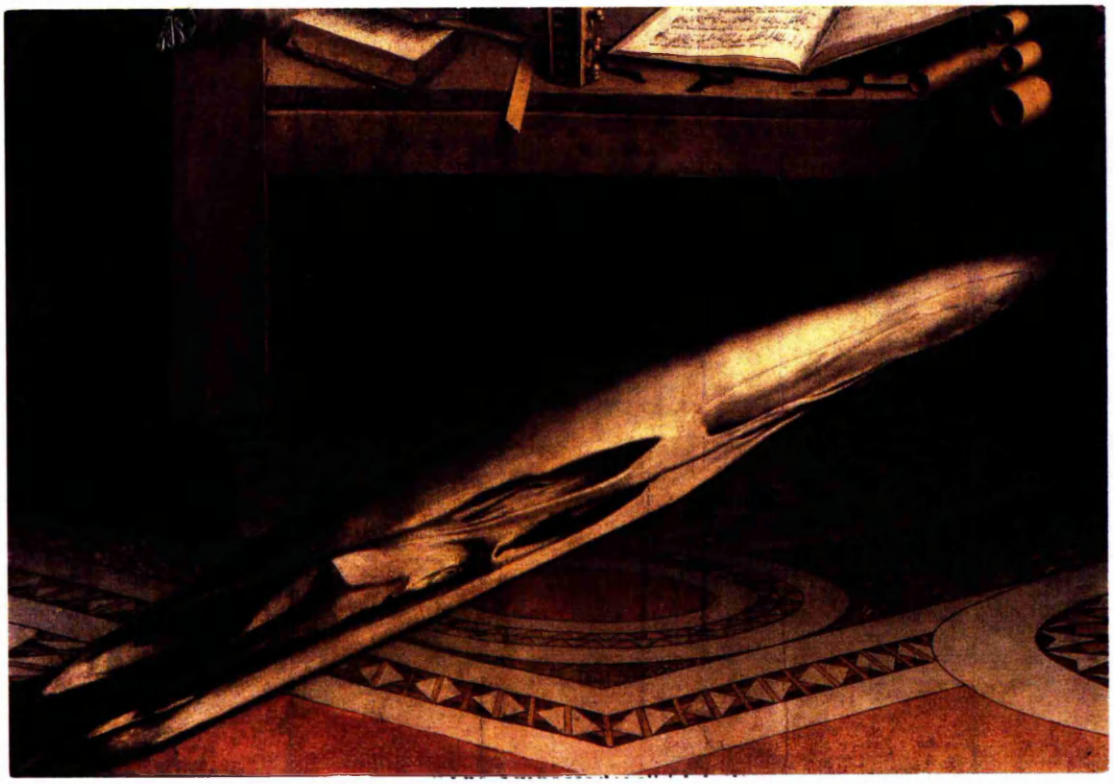


Fig. 26. Hans Holbein,
"The Ambassadors" (detail).

Two spectacular interpretations have been given for the conditions in which the skull was intended to be seen. According to the first explanation the painting was meant to be hung in a particular room: the viewer would come in from a door placed in front of the painting, then he would go out from a side door to the right of it so that it is only when he turns round to cast a final glance at the painting that he is able to perceive the object for what it is. Another interpretation is based on optical studies of anamorphosis. The skull is visible through a glass cylinder (for instance a glass). This would presuppose a 'joke' on Holbein's part: the painting, intended to be seen for the first time at a reception for Jean de Dinteville*, would reveal its allusion to death at the point when the guests raised their glasses for a toast.

The objects, on the contrary, clearly denote one or more aspects of the models' personality and of the political and historical context in which they move. Omar Calabrese distinguishes at least four different strategies: 1) Quotation 2) Synecdoche 3) Inter-text 4) Self-quotation (23).

1) Visual quotations

Some of the objects depicted beside the two models are quoted from their lives and ideas - the Bible beside Georges de Selve, the scientific tools beside Dinteville* (24).

2) Synecdoche.

At a first level the presence of all these scientific tools stands for science and modernity; the Book of Hymns for religion and reformation. At a deeper level each detail represent synecdochically the Liberal Arts and in particular the disciplines of the Quadrivium: the lute for music, Apianus's book for Arithmetic, the goniometer (and the floor) for Geometry; the six instruments on the table for Astronomy.

3) Inter-text

A number of people and ideas are represented implicitly on canvas. A detail can thus refer to men and deeds which do not figure in the painting but which become an inter-text for its reading. Thomas More and Erasmus cannot be explicitly represented in the painting: the latter because he is accused of heresy, the former because of his opposition

to Henry VIII's divorce from Catherine of Aragon. They are implicitly present in the allusions to death. Thomas More in Utopia writes: "We foresee death and believe it is a long way off, yet it is buried in the most secret of our organs" (as paraphrased by Calabrese 1985, 73). As for Erasmus, his In Praise of Folly is based on the idea of the vanity of knowledge and the inevitability of death. Other important figures of the time are more clearly evoked: Niklaus Kratzer, Henry VIII's astronomer, is present through four of the astronomical instruments and, in particular, the goniometer; Copernicus through the celestial globe (1533 was the year in which Copernicus defended heliocentrism against the current theories of geocentrism); Magellano, Vespucci, Vasco da Gama and the period of great explorations are signified by the routes marked on the Schöner globe; Martin Luther in the Book of Hymns beside Georges de Selve.

4) Self-quotation.

Examples of self-quotation may be found, as mentioned earlier, in the many allusions to death, ideologically and linguistically associated with the painter. Another type of self-quotation would be the depiction of four of Niklaus Kratzer's astronomical instruments. It is an allusion to the friendship between the painter and the astronomer but also a self-quotation, as they figure in Holbein's portrait of Niklaus Kratzer (1528).

The Narrative Portrait

The narrative portrait celebrates the actions of a character in a given moment of his/her life. Symbols and objects are inserted to signify the context in which the event has to be placed. Often they refer to past events leading to the moment depicted but they do not usually refer to the moment or context in which the painting was conceived. The constraint is also different because rules are no longer imposed by the commissioner; however the painter has to take into account the pictorial tradition attached to the legend he chooses to represent. The three narrative artists of the Paintings List - Carpaccio, Breughel and Giorgione - all deal with well-known legends but treat them in idiosyncratic fashion.

"Saint Ursula" (Fig. 47) depicts the moment in which a messenger announces

her imminent death to the saint (25). Ursula was engaged to marry an English prince on condition that he converted to Christianity. They undertook a pilgrimage to Rome to seek the Pope's approval but, before reaching their destination, they were slaughtered, together with the 11 000 virgins accompanying them.

In Carpaccio's representation Saint Ursula is sleeping peacefully while the messenger of death, calm and indifferent, betrays nothing of the terrible message he bears for her. This is conveyed through the symbols of death placed around them: the palm of martyrdom he carries, the myrtle, symbol of love and death. Other details point to the voyage (the statue of Atlas) and to marriage - the carnation, symbol of love.

Carpaccio uses conventional symbolism to represent the main ideas associated with the legend of Saint Ursula but the portrait is different from the usual interpretation of similar myths. In traditional Annunciations, the Virgin is represented near a window or under a porch to signify her readiness to receive the divine message. Carpaccio's interpretation, on the contrary, revolves around the idea of enclosure. The annunciation takes place in a closed room (the first interior of Art History - Lauts 1962, 19) - the only open door reveals nothing of the outside world. Ursula has her eyes shut as if refusing the idea of her imminent death. On the pillow on which her head is resting, the inscription "IN- FAN-NTIA" indicates that the refusal is not only a refusal of death. She refuses to relinquish her childhood and become a woman or, perhaps, childhood is a refuge from the difficulties she foresees. Although the emphasis is still on death, Ursula, in Carpaccio's eyes, is not so much a martyr but an adolescent on the threshold of womanhood, with all the fears and emotions that this transition entails.

Breughel's "Icarus" (Fig. 46) is a free interpretation of Ovid's legend (26): Daedalus and his son Icarus, try to escape from the Labyrinth with wings made of wax and feathers but Icarus, inebriated by his own power, and despite his father's warnings, flies too near the sun. The wax melts, and he drowns in the sea. The story has been illustrated on canvas many times. Hans Bols, Joos de Momper, Tobias Verhaecht, to mention but a few, produced paintings which bore the title of and represented the fall of Icarus (Fig. 27-29).

Fig. 27. Joos de Momper,
"The Fall of Icarus" (1618)
Paris, Musée du Louvre.

Fig. 28. Tobias Verhaecht,
"The Fall of Icarus" (c. 1600)
Frankfurt, Städelsches
Kunstinstitut.

Fig. 29. Hans Bol,
"The Fall of Icarus" (1590)
Antwerp, Mayer van den Bergh Museum.

Unlike his successors' interpretations, Breughel deals with the accomplished event. In his painting there are very few traces of the anecdote: a leg in the water, that of Icarus; the partridge, an allusion to Daedalus's nephew, Perdrix who, according to the legend, witnessed his cousin's fall with great satisfaction. In the distance, a mysterious island, perhaps Crete, where Icarus and his father had been exiled and where Daedalus had built the Labyrinth in which to keep the Minotaur.

Within this loose interpretation of the legend, Breughel omits or falsifies some of the details, adding a further mystery to the scene - Daedalus is absent; the sun is setting although the legend, and logic, require it to be at its zenith.

Most of the painting is taken up by a pastoral scene at the end of a day's work. The peasant ploughing, an allusion to the German proverb "No plough stops for a man dying"; the shepherd looking at the sky, more as if he were in a dream than as if he were waiting for more strange creatures to fall from the sky; sheep are peacefully grazing around him. On the sea a ship, with sailors working away.

The composition is carefully orchestrated in planes and vedute leading the viewer's eye to the "main" details of the story (the peasant with his bright red shirt; the shepherd, at the exact centre of the painting; the island). To the left, Breughel depicts, the tranquillity of daily life and honest work while, to the right, he portrays the instant (the fall of Icarus). The message is conveyed through contrast (humbleness against pride; timelessness against the moment in time) and contradictions rather than through clearly readable images and symbols.

Giorgione's "Tempest" (Fig. 49) has intrigued art critics of all periods (27). Some go as far as to say that the painting "raconte une histoire dont rien ne révèle le sens" (Chefs-d'oeuvre de l'art, unpaged). The apparent mysteriousness of Giorgione's masterpiece has given rise to all sorts of interpretations ranging from autobiography (the child is the little Giorgio himself, an illegitimate son) to religion (Eve and Cain) by way of mythology (Io and Epaphos; Adrastus and Hypsipile) and allegory (the allegory

of Forces of Nature or the allegory of Fortune).

The interpretation that will be retained here is the one used by Perec in Vme. According to this reading, the myth depicted by Giorgione is that of the goddess Io with whom Zeus fell in love. Hera, jealous of her husband, changed her into a white heifer and condemned her to a nomad life, chased by a horse-fly and watched closely by Argos, the hundred-eyed monster. Zeus asked Hermes to distract Argos, which he did by telling him stories. Meanwhile Io, still chased by the fly, arrives in Egypt, where Zeus frees her from her animal appearance and gives her a son, Epaphos.

Giorgione paints the legend in its concluding moments: Io is no longer a heifer and has already given birth to the child. Yet he sets the scene in an idyllic landscape that is not immediatly recognisable as an Egyptian landscape. The story is evoked by more or less veiled allusions: Io's exclusion from Olympus is signified by the broken pillar, the snake under Io's heel, the distant 'ideal' city; her travels by the presence of all the possible landscapes she might have encountered - the countryside, the water, the town - and that of Hermes, the protector of travellers; her punishment is evoked again by Hermes's watchful presence, although in the legend it is Argos, not Hermes who is charged to be her guardian. Like Breughel, Giorgione uses contrast as the main vehicle for the conveyance of the message - the contrast between the apparently peaceful scene of a woman feeding her child and the menacing symbolism.

The Genre Portrait

The genre portrait resembles the court portrait, only in this case the artist portrays a whole category of people, embodied by his model(s). The identification of the type is reached, once again, through qualifying objects and details which work synecdochically: the pen for the writer, the lion for Saint Jerome, the balance for the moneylender. Like the narrative portraitists, genre artists are constrained by the tradition attached to the chosen subject, but also by the commissioner, as these paintings were often made for a didactic purpose, to be used as examples of virtue or as warnings against vice.

Saint Jerome and the Moneychanger are figures often represented on canvas, but Antonello and Metsys both introduce significant modifications (28).

The conventional portrait of Saint Jerome is that of the saint in cardinal clothes, surrounded by books (he is the protector of writers and translators) and holding in his hand the lion's paw to signify his generosity and the lion's gratitude (Hall's Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols, 168-169). Antonello inserts the same details but in a different construction (29) (Fig. 41). The saint is not only surrounded by books, he is also reading and represented in a profile - a pose that cuts out any possible interference from the outside world. Even the lion is in the background, as if hesitating to disturb the saint at work. The painting evolves around the centrepiece of the saint's study, in a chinese-box construction: in the foreground, a window-sill bearing three symbols of vice - the peacock (pride), the gold of the basin (avarice), the quail (earthly passions). The window acts as a threshold of sanctity. In the second and third 'boxes' (on the step leading to the saint's study and in the saint's immediate surroundings) Antonello paints the antithetical symbols of virtue - the two plants, the towel. The painting plays on the contrast between virtue and vice but also between erudition and devotion. In a sense, portraying the saint as a central figure, imposing his presence on the space around him, does not comply with the theological principles of the time (which place erudition in the service of faith) but focuses on Saint Jerome's real interest - books. Perec himself gives this interpretation of the painting:

> "L'espace tout entier s'organise autour de ce *meuble* (et le meuble tout entier s'organise autour du livre): l'architecture glaciale de l'église (la nudité de ses carrelages, l'hostilité de ses piliers) s'annule: ses perspectives et ses verticales cessent de délimiter le seul lieu d'une foi ineffable; elles ne sont plus là que pour donner au meuble son échelle, lui permettre de *s'inscrire*: au centre de l'inhabitable, le meuble définit un espace domestiqué que les chats, les livres et les hommes habitent avec sérénité."
>
> (Eses, 117-18)

It should also be noted here that this description is included in the section of Eses entitled "La Conquête de l'espace", describing instances of uninhabitable spaces that have been rendered inhabitable (Roussel's caravan, an airport, a tunnel). To Antonello's extraordinary sense of space corresponds the saint's ability to transform, through his presence, his surroundings.

Metsys' "The Banker" (Fig. 51) was inspired by a "Saint Eloy" (Fig. 30), in which Petrus Christus paints the shop of a goldsmith (30): the goldsmith is sitting in front of his scales, looking blankly at a point situated outside the painting, to the left of the viewer; the bride to be, standing beside him, holds out her hand to take the ring while the groom, beside the bride, looks down to the ring. Petrus Christus applies a technique often used in Renaissance painting, which consists in fitting the main details/models in a triangle. In this case the triangle is formed by the ring on which the eyes of both the bride and the groom converge. Saint Eloy is outside this triangle, except for his hand, holding the ring. In Metsys we find the same construction, focused on the money the Banker is holding. This time the Banker and his wife's eyes form the other two angles of the triangle, that is, they are both mentally engaged in their activity.

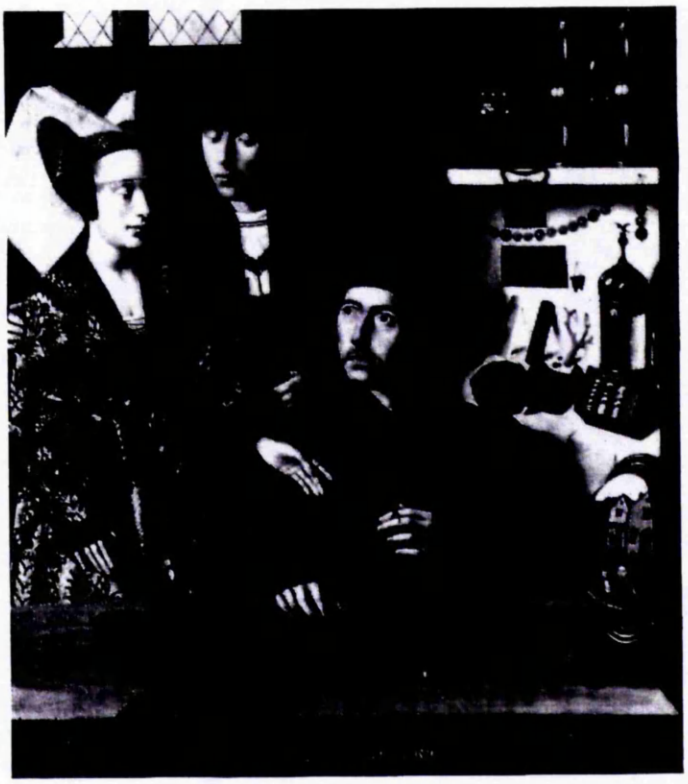


Fig. 30.
Petrus Christus,
"Saint Eloy"
(1449)
New York,
Lehman
collection

Metsys applies religious symbolism to a secular subject: the balance, symbol of justice and ultimately, of the Last Judgment (hence the inscription on the frame "Statura justa et aequa sint pondere"), the orange on the shelf, symbol of original sin; the "magic" mirror used in the iconographical tradition of the time to signify vanity. Metsys, though, subverts the image by superimposing two different meanings on the same object. The mirror is used as a spy-hole onto the street rather than an instrument of self-contemplation and divination. The miniature scene inscribed in it is an example of virtue (the man reading the Bible in front of a church).

Other elements, including the models' pose and gestures as well as the luxury of the objects around them, point to the couple's daily life. Metsys sought to touch the local bourgeois by representing a scene with which they could readily identify.

Unlike later versions of "Moneychangers", though, Metsys plays on ambiguity: beside the symbols of vice he paints details that can be interpreted in favour of the couple - the woman was reading a prayer book before being interrupted by her husband (in later versions this will be replaced by an accountancy book), there are prayer beads on one of the shelves.

Bosch's "Hay Wagon" (Fig. 43) is not a portrait of the kind discussed so far but it could be seen as a type of portrait, presenting features in common with both the narrative and the genre paintings. It is no longer the celebration of one (group of) individual(s) but the celebration, in negative this time, of mankind, seen in a situation of vice (31).

The painting represent Man's fatal journey towards Hell, typified by the Fool portrayed on the closed triptych (Fig. 44) - the wanderer who crosses life, careless of his soul and of his destiny, leaving behind him death and sin. The "Hay Wagon", the central panel of the triptych, illustrates the Flemish proverb "Life is a hay wagon, everyone grabs what he can" meaning that people spend their lives running after material wealth (hay). The characters are caricatures of the different kinds of sinners, surrounded, like the Fool, by images of death and debauchery. In the right hand panel,

dealing specifically with Hell, they become increasingly grotesque:

> "un monde de larves et de bêtes, avec des êtres sans yeux traînant des carcasses d'animaux, et des monstres démoniaques à corps d'oiseau, de porc ou de poisson".
> (Vme, 447)

At first glance this painting seems to be very different from the life-like portraits on Perec's list. Bosch paints a profusion of grotesque characters in such a way that even the more realistic elements of the painting (the sky, the fire) seem to be part of a fantastic world and add to the atmosphere of catastrophe. At the same time, behind the grotesque, there is a faithful representation of man's mind. Gombrich sees this triptych as an extremely realistic painting:

> "For the first time an artist has succeeded in giving a concrete and tangible shape to the fears that had haunted the mind of man in the Middle Ages. [...] Hieronimus Bosch could have written on one of his paintings of Hell what Van Eyck wrote on his peaceful scene of the Arnolfini: 'I was here'."
> (Gombrich 1989, 264)

Deciphering all the details encrypted in Bosch's painting would be too lengthy a process. Broadly speaking his use of symbolism is of a medieval kind. For Bosch everything is a symbol: colours, letters, people, objects... He does not restrict himself to religious icons but includes in his pictures an imagery borrowed from magic, tarots, heraldry, or anything else that suits his purpose.

Perec as a portrait artist

> "The descriptive method lacks humanity. Its transformation of men into still lifes is only the artistic manifestation of its inhumanity."
>
> (Lukács 1978, 140)

With these words Lukács condemns the use of description for its own's sake, which he considers as "a divorce of literature from its epic significance". Perec's characters often give the impression of being still lifes, not only because of an apparent lack of communication with the reader (see above, p. 91) but also because of their fixed pose, the sparsity of dialogue and the absence of any substantial psychological interpretation on the author's part. Yet the characters of Vme are much more "human" that one might think at first glance and Perec's position is much closer to Lukács "epic significance". In fact, whereas objects and places are described in minute detail, the description of characters is less precise and hardly ever takes up more than a few lines, whether they be fully developed characters or just decorative elements within the painting.

Perec's treatment of character in Vme can be compared to the three genres identified for the ten paintings: court, narrative and genre portraits.

a) The Court portrait: strategies

1) The secret

Like Holbein's "Ambassadors", Vme is based on a secret, signified, this time, not by a closed curtain but by the removal of the façade. The set of rooms which look onto the street apparently hide no secret since they are all clearly visible. Yet they fulfil the same purpose as the closed curtain in so far as they conceal all the rooms located on the other side of the building (a glimpse of which is sometimes caught through a door left ajar, such as the trompe l'oeil bookcase in the third floor right apartment, Vme, 173).

The mystery is reinforced by the juxtaposition of extremely detailed

descriptions whereby objects and people are precisely situated in the space of the building (and of the novel), and the sparse and misleading description of Valène's painting depicting the apartment-block. The first mention comes in Chapter VII, where Morellet's room is described as it appears in the painting ("Sur le tableau la chambre est comme elle est aujourd'hui", Vme, 46). One question immediatly springs to mind: which painting ? The second mention, explaining more clearly Valène's project, comes in Chapter XXVIII:

> "L'idée même de ce tableau qu'il projetait de faire et dont les images étalées, éclatées, s'étaient mises à hanter le moindre de ses instants, meublant ses rêves, forçant ses souvenirs, l'idée même de cet immeuble éventré montrant à nu les fissures de son passé, l'écroulement de son présent, cet entassement sans suite d'histoires grandioses ou dérisoires [...]".
> (Vme, 168)

Although it seems impossible now to read Vme without any previous knowledge of cross-sectioned buildings, the only mention in the novel of this conceit is the "immeuble éventré montrant à nu les fissures de son passé" as part of a description of a building which is falling apart. It would perhaps not be clear to an hypothetical naïve reader whether the apartment block is laid bare because of Valène's project or vice versa.

Moreover, the constant shift in the tense used to describe the painting (present, future, conditional) makes it even more difficult for the reader to know whether the painting is an actual painting, a painting to be, or a work in progress. Further inconsistencies are to be found when the painter-narrator situates characters beside windows logically placed on the façade that, in principle, has been removed (Jane Sutton, Ch. X; Véronique Altamont, Ch. LXXXVIII).

A second anamorphic procedure may be identified in Perec's citational practice. The post-scriptum refers to the presence of quotations from thirty authors. The reader's deception at this revelation is double: first of all, he failed to recognise any of these

quotations; secondly, the fact that Perec inserted snippets from other books without the conventional markers of quotation goes against the idea of literature as a "creative" process and that of reading as the privileged moment of communion with the writer's inspiration (see Chapter 2 above).

The principle of anamorphosis is to deconstruct a given image into single components, then reconstruct it with a deformed perspective so that the initial image is no longer visible. Valène's painting and Perec's novel work in the same manner: the painting and the authors quoted are first deconstructed, then fragments are inserted in the text in a more or less modified, more or less deceptive form.

Broadly speaking, it might be said that Vme as a whole is an anamorphic novel where space, characters, stories, autobiographical inscriptions, and so on, are fragmented into "insignificant" units and put together so as to puzzle the reader.

2) Confusing the reader

One characteristic of court portraits such as the "Ambassadors", the "Arnolfini", or the "Meninas" is that they all insert details to confuse the reader (the skull, the mirror). Perec uses similar strategies, only, this time, the deformation is operated through language as well as through content.

The sheer number of characters of Vme (over five hundred), and the fragmentation of descriptive and narrative elements would be in itself enough to confuse the reader.

Moreover real and fictional characters are described in the same manner and placed in a space of pseudo-fiction, or pseudo-reality, where the character is fictional but might well be real or, vice versa, he is real but might well have come from Perec's imagination. Even more so since the majority of names are perfectly plausible names (with a few self-evidently humorous exceptions such as Olivetti and Margueritte, Vme, 212).

Characters are referred to either by their own name (or nickname) or by their married name (Olivia Norv ell-Rorschash, Elisabeth Orlova-Beaumont), they often bear

homophonic names (Orlova/ Orlowska, Altamont/Beaumont, etc.). In this sense the homophony acts like Velasquez's or Van Eyck's mirror as almost identical sequences of letters are used to deceive the reader.

Similarly, characters are sometimes described at different stages of their lives - like a vanitas of the 17th century, Vme is full of refences to the passing of time (photographs, memories, clocks, watches, etc.). The link between characters at different times of their lives is not always made immediately.

Stories are also easily confused since they often bear subtle similarities. In Chapter XXXI a French au-pair (Elisabeth Breidel) is employed by a diplomat working in London (Sven Ericsson). The au-pair is then left alone with the diplomat's wife and her son while he attends to some business in London and on his return, forty-eight hours later, he finds his son drowned in the bath and his wife dead. In Chapter LXXXVI we find an English au-pair (Jane Sutton) lent by the Rorschash to a Swiss diplomat working in Paris and who will join his wife and son only forty-eight hours after their arrival (32).

Similarities and mirror constructions are inserted to confuse the reader. They question the way in which, in real life, we get to know people and also they question the workings of the mind and of memory in the interaction with others. Thoughts and recollections are often incomplete, doubtful and uncertain, an attitude that is reminiscent of Perec's own confusion in Wse:

> "De temps en temps, on changeait de lieu, on allait dans une autre pension ou dans une autre famille. Les choses et les lieux n'avaient pas de noms ou en avaient plusieurs; les gens n'avaient pas de visage. Une fois, c'était une tante, et la fois d'après c'était une autre tante. Ou bien une grand-mère."
>
> (Wse, 94)

3) Inscription of the author

Many characters of Vme present authorial features, reflecting either Perec's own life and personality, or his way of writing: Valène comes from Etampes (where Perec

went to school) and uses a technique for painting that is similar to Perec's art of writing; Hutting uses a system of constraints to paint his "imaginary portraits", the titles of which (pp. 352- 354) hide the name of members of the Oulipo (see p. 168 below); Smautf's obsession with factorials and Abel Speiss's word-games reflect, once again, Oulipian practices (33). References to Perec's previous and forthcoming works - George Bretzlee's The Wanderers (Les Errants), p. 153, Ellis Island, p. 601 - or recurrent characters in Perec's oeuvre - Grégoire Simpson (UHQD), G. Winckler (Le Condottiere, Wse) are also inscribed in the text.

Sometimes the inscriptions are more subtle. The story of the Breidels (in Yiddish, breidele means "bread roll", cf. Wse, 51) contains some biographical details - François worked first in Neuweiler, home town of Perec's German translator, where Perec spent many working holidays, then in Chateau d'Oex, where Perec attended a language school (Je me souviens, n° 81). Elisabeth spends most of her life trying to cover up her identity and her past. The most clever ruse she uses is the one that allows her to reach France without leaving a trace of her name on the passenger list and she does it by erasing the first letter of her name (Ambert instead of Lambert). In other words, the means used to cover herself in this short "detective story" are lipogrammatic, just as the lipogram is the constraint that regulates another detective novel by Perec, La Disparition. Significantly, the detective hired by her mother, Salini (an anagram of François Le Lionnais) relies on methods often used in detective fiction: anagrams, dreams and mathematical operations.

Another form of self-inscription is the insertion, in each chapter, of snippets of the author's daily life, a free interpretation of William Burrough's "cut up technique", which consists of cutting up lines or pages of prose and rearranging the fragments (34). Perec applies it specifically to autobiographical "cuttings", that is, he inserts something that took place during the composition of the novel. Unlike the self-references inscribed in the different characters, these are mostly for internal use, somewhat like Holbein's "jokes".

This is where Holbein and Perec part company. In fact, whereas in the

"Ambassadors" objects and inscriptions refer also to the historical situation in which the painting was conceived, in Vme the political and historical context of 1975 seems absent. Whilst history plays an important part in the novel - the discovery of America (Ch. LXXX), Napoleon I (Ch. LXXVIII), Bismarck (Ch. XCIX), etc. - contemporary history seems to be centred on the Second World War (except for one reference to the Algerian war where Olivier Gratiolet loses his leg, Vme, 346). Within the apartment-block we are told who collaborated with the Germans and who, on the contrary, joined the Resistance; Olivier Gratiolet spent his time in the cellar deciphering coded messages on his wireless; Appenzzell's mother joins the Resistance and is killed at Vassieux-en-Vercors; Paul Hébert is deported to Buchenwald...

The late 1970s were undoubtedly a less dramatic period, yet the disproportion between the many references to the war and the silence on contemporary history is striking. It might be argued that, since Vme is intended to be the literary transposition of Steinberg's drawing, done in 1949, it logically reproduces the time of the drawing rather than that of narration. "The Art of Living" is atypical of the artist's style as there are no allusions to the historical situation of the time, nor comments about society (as opposed to the series of "Cocktail parties",1967, or his caricatures of bureaucracy in "The Passport", 1954). Only superficial details such as clothes, curlers, etc., allow the viewer to date the drawing in the second half of the 20th century. Perec's attitude can be seen as mid-way between Steinberg's atemporality and Holbein's historical precision, only in the case of Vme the principal historical preoccupation is not contemporary to the writing of the novel.

It indicates, or perhaps confirms, that Vme is more about memory and the past (Valène's memory but also that of the author) than one would think at first glance, a past in which the author has an active role, choosing and rearranging details and events.

4) Quotations, self-quotations, allusions and inter-text

This is an aspect that has been studied in detail by many Perecquians (Bellos 1987, Pawlikowska 1988, Magné 1989). However, it is interesting to mention a few

cases in which Perec's strategy comes close to that of Holbein's. In fact, characters and objects in Vme, often refer to an extra-diegetic universe, in the way that each object in the "Ambassadors" refers to the artist's entourage.

Characters may be borrowed from other books (see above, p.90) or may just share with their literary sources one or more features of their personality, or they may share the same past. This is the case, for instance, of Cyrille Altamont (p. 373) and Juste Gratiolet (p. 204), whose physical appearance is quoted from Thomas Mann, The Magic Mountain (respectively Vol. II, p. 140 and Vol. I, p. 88) ; similarly Doctor Dinteville's ancestor's appearance and personality (p. 78) comes from Rabelais (the description of Panurge in Pantagruel, 259); Olivia Norvell's fourth husband's life-style is modelled on that of a character from Calvino's Cosmicomics (p. 94).

Sometimes the character walks straight into Vme from another book, taking all his belongings with him (Grégoire Simpson with his pink basin and his portrait of "Le Condottiere", from UHQD).

Objects, too, are quoted from real life or literature - the barometer on p. 542 ("If tail is fine...") belongs to one of Perec's friends (mentioned in Bellos, GPLW, 629); the golf tee and the wasp on p. 21 or the crucifix on p. 84 are quoted from Harry Mathews, respectively from Conversions (p. 51-52) and from Tlooth (VCMA, 85) The Réols' bed (p. 595) is a collage of the different entries for "modern beds" in a furniture catalogue of a shop for wealthy buyers (of the "Monsieur Meuble" type) (35).

On other occasions, Perec not only quotes the object but invites the reader to continue the reading elsewhere, as in the case of Bartlebooth's trunk:

> "Son contenu reprenait, simplement modernisé, celui de la malle lestée de tonneaux vides que le capitaine Nemo fait échouer sur une plage à l'intention des braves colons de l'île Lincoln, et dont la nomenclature exacte, notée sur une feuille du carnet de Gédéon Spilett, occupe, accompagnée il est vrai de deux gravures presque pleine page, les pages 223 à 226 de l'*Ile mystérieuse* (Ed. Hetzel)."
>
> (Vme, 428)

As in the "Ambassadors", the intertextual references in Vme, though not always clearly readable, create around the author a system of connivances: they refer to friends and writers Perec knew and liked (some, like Harry Mathews or Raymond Queneau, fall in both these categories), and also to "infra-ordinary" objects from daily life.

e) Qualifying objects and synecdoche

In general terms the number and distribution of objects act as signifiers of the character's personality - the lists of objects in Madame Marcia's shop or in Madame Altamont's cellar, give the impression of a cluttered place, in the first instance, and of overabundance in the second, as the list is organised to reproduce the shelves of a supermarket.

Particular objects attached to a character can enlighten an aspect of his/her personality. Madame Moreau's bed, which she had sent from her house in Saint-Mouézy, is an indication of her attachment to and nostalgia for country life despite her success as a business woman. Some of the objects placed in Bartlebooth's apartment belong to his great-uncle, James Sherwood, and signify an affinity between the two (both spend their life in the pursuit of a chimera, only to be duped by ingenious craftsmen).

It is interesting to note, on this point, that objects act as a substitute for psychological interpretation. This is clear from the drafts of some passages of Vme where Perec deliberately removes "psychological" statements. The description of Madame de Beaumont's cellar gives an indication of the bitterness with which she regards her past as a famous opera singer:

> "Vieux objets: [...] boîtes à chaussures débordant de cartes postales, paquets de lettres d'amour serrées dans des élastiques aujourd'hui détendus [...] photographies, photographies cornées, jaunies, craquelées".
>
> (Vme, 452-53)

while in an earlier version Perec is more explicit:

> "M. de B déteste les souvenirs. Elle a mis à la cave ttes les lettres d'amour que ses amants ss nombre lui ont adressé et des morceaux de photos cornées, jaunies, rayées, des cartes postales."
>
> (FP 61)

Speaking about the description of objects and the "psychology" of characters Perec says:

> "Je déteste ce qu'on appelle 'la psychologie' surtout dans le roman. Je préfère des livres où les personnages sont décrits par leurs actions, par leurs gestes et par ce qui les entoure. Je veux dire que décrire un personnage à travers la montre qu'il porte - c'est pour moi, d'une certaine manière, beaucoup plus intéressant que dire que c'est un homme qui connaît ceci, pense cela. C'est quelque chose qui appartient à la grande tradition du réalisme dans le roman anglais et allemand du XIXe siècle et que j'ai un peu exagéré, presque jusqu'à l'hyperréalisme, en décrivant les objets, en allant encore plus loin dans les détails. Les choses nous décrivent. Nous pouvons décrire les êtres à travers les objets, à travers le milieu qui les entoure et la manière dont ils se déplacent dans ce milieu."
>
> (EP 1983, 71)

Many characters are associated with one object in particular, especially so in Valène's mind. By way of example, the following passage illustrates quite clearly how Valène's mind works:

> "il y avait des gens dont il n'arrivait plus du tout à se souvenir, d'autres dont il lui restait une image unique et dérisoire: le face-à-main de Madame Appenzzell, les figurines en liège découpé que Monsieur Troquet faisait entrer dans des bouteilles et qu'il allait vendre le dimanche sur les Champs-Elysées, la cafetière émaillée bleue toujours tenue chaude sur un coin de la cuisinière de Madame Fresnel."
>
> (Vme, 90)

Like Renaissance paintings, objects function as synecdoche: in Valène's imagination the object is the person.

b) The Narrative Portrait

Perec's attraction to this genre is justified by the narrative potential of the painting and also by the fact that the chosen painters portray the legend in a unorthodox way. Perec's very special use of narration conforms with his painterly models.

Although Vme, by its very nature, is a book where description plays an important part, it is also a book that appeals to the reader because of the stories told - not just the plot in the traditional sense, that is the story line that runs from beginning to end and justifies the book, but also a number of apparently unrelated "short stories" that interrupt and complete the description of the building. Perec himself liked the sort of book he could "devour", cover to cover, "couché à plat ventre sur [le] lit" (Eses, 26) - Dumas, Jules Verne, Leiris - and imagines the reader of Vme to be similarly absorbed:

> "Moi, j'imagine le lecteur vraiment à plat ventre sur son lit, en train de lire le livre [...] en passant des pages parce que ça l'embête et tout d'un coup retombant sur une histoire qui..."
>
> (OB 1981, 55)

However, Perec's hero is neither the conventional "epic" hero, the fearless one who travels the world, fighting off all sorts of dangers in the name of his country, his honour or science; nor is he the so-called "anti-hero", going through life without a reason, a born victim, predestined to failure.

On the contrary, Bartlebooth is a perfectly ordinary, if a little extravagant, millionaire. Deprived of motivation because of his incredible wealth, he designs his life in a master plan that is, in itself, a work of art (36). This plan leads him to travel the world but the artist portrays him, like Saint Ursula, in the enclosed space of his Parisian apartment, just as he is about to die.

It may also be remarked, in passing, that Ursula and Bartlebooth share the same

personality as well as the same destiny. Ursula's closed eyes are a sign of her refusal to grow older, a refusal that takes the form of retreat into childhood (the inscription on the pillow-case). Similarly, Bartlebooth is "killed" by memory since this is one of the possible interpretations for Winckler and since one of the reasons for Bartlebooth's failure to reconstitute the puzzle is that he refuses to see the pieces of puzzle simply as pieces of wood of different shapes, without associating them with a memory of the port he once depicted. In other words, Ursula's closed eyes and Bartlebooth's blindness are both expressions of the same refusal to look forward or of the same attachment to the past (Molteni 1993, 130).

Other devices draw together Vme with the narrative paintings on Perec's list and, in particular, with "Icarus" and the "Tempest". These may be identified in the shift of emphasis, the contrast between apparently incongruous elements and the mystery that results from the use of these two devices.

The novel is supposed to be the description of an ordinary building in the seventeenth arrondissement, so ordinary that Valène sometimes dreams of major catastrophies that will disrupt the calmness of its life (Vme, 169). In this "ordinary" building live, or have lived, one millionaire, four artists, one of whom is of international renown, one actor, a television producer, one impresario, two murderers, one witch in direct contact with the devil ... That is to say the inhabitants are not exactly what one would expect to find in just any apartment-block. It indicates that looking carefully at the "ordinary" things reveals uncommon situations and events, just like the apparently ordinary scene in Breughel's painting hides the dramatic downfall of Icarus.

Moreover, the main event of the book (Bartlebooth's death and Winckler's revenge) is not given a predominant place but it is present in the form of veiled allusions:

> "Gaspard Winckler est mort, mais la longue vengeance qu'il a si patiemment, si minutieusement ourdie, n'a pas encore fini de s'assouvir."
>
> (Ch. I, 22)

> "Les escaliers pour lui [Valène], c'était, à chaque étage, un souvenir [...] au sixième droite, le ronflement obstiné de la scie sauteuse de Gaspard Winckler auquel trois étages plus bas, au troisième gauche, ne continuait à répondre qu'un insupportable silence."
>
> (Ch. XVII, 91)

> "Il y avait dans ce regard [de Bartlebooth vers Valène] qui l'évitait quelque chose de beaucoup plus violent que le vide, quelque chose qui n'était pas seulement de l'orgueil ou de la haine, mais presque de la panique, quelque chose comme un espoir insensé, comme un appel au secours, comme un signal de détresse."
>
> (Ch. XXVIII, 166)

The final image left to the reader is that of Bartlebooth's hand holding a W-shaped piece of puzzle, like Icarus' leg, a small detail in the complexity of the work. Unlike traditional novels where the hero is an "agent" of the action, Vme not only has no action, but its hero is little more than a "presence" in the work.

While a number of the mysteries in Vme remain unresolved (who is the father of Geneviève Foulerot's baby? Or that of Celia Crespi's son ? Who is the young girl in the third floor right apartment ?) it is sometimes possible to try to unravel some of the mysteries by deciphering the veiled allusions inscribed in the text.

Sometimes it is an object that acts as a 'qualifier': Winckler's "witches' mirrors" or his jigsaw are an allusion to his craftiness; the recurent shadowless scyalitic lamp that accompanies Bartlebooth's reassembling of puzzles is a sign of an "interior sight" (Molteni 1993, 130), and so on.

A second strategy consists in the repetition of adjective or in the use of adjectives and nouns belonging to the same semantic field. The semantic fields that link Bartlebooth and Winckler are those of obstinacy and discretion, even if, individually, they develop differently. Bartlebooth is most commonly associated with an obsessive and unhealthy "passion" ("passion morbide", 340, "ravages de la passion", 528, etc.) and the two contrasting fields of excitement and depression, enthusiasm and

desperation ("ivresse", "exaltation", "enthousiasme", 421 and "vide", "blanc", 166, "exaspération", "abattement", 420, etc.). Winckler, on the other hand, is defined by adjectives and nouns denoting craftiness ("ruse", 250, 417, "piège", 167, 250, 415, "préméditation", 250, "habileté", 253, "subtil", 481) and patience ("patiemment", 22, "posément", "calmement", 53).

There are many such examples amongst the characters of Vme. In this sense it is the adjective or the noun that act as "qualifying" or symbolic objects, allowing the author to suggest possible interpretations without having to interpret himself, or via the narrator, the actions of his characters.

Finally the use of words and phrases which recall, directly or indirectly, Perec's previous works provide a further interpretation of the story. The terminology used to describe Bartlebooth and his project takes up some of the themes of Wse and makes it possible to interpret the story of Bartlebooth as a metaphor of life and his failure to complete the project as partly due to the workings of a faulty and deceptive memory (Molteni 1993, 126-127).

Gaspard Winckler provides the best example of Perec's use of language to create a continuity in his oeuvre. Winckler is a recurrent figure in Perec's oeuvre - he is a forger of genius who fails to produce an Antonello and murders his commissioner in Le Condottiere (see above, Chapter 2) ; he is also the false name of a character in Wse looking for his identity and that of the autistic child in the same book. The Gaspard Winckler of Vme presents some similarities with all of his predecessors but, most of all, with Grégoire Simpson.

Both are, to varying degrees, silent characters:

G. Winckler	G. Simpson
"ne parlai[en]t pas beaucoup" (Vme, 55)	"n'adressait plus la parole à personne" (Vme, 306)
"se tut obstinément" (Vme, 96)	

G. Winckler, in particular,

"ne disait à personne comment il
passait ses journées et ses nuits."
(Vme, 55)

a mystery that remains unresolved also for the young student who does not know himself what he does with his time.

They both have the habit of eating in the same café every day: G. Simpson in a friterie (Roger la frite?), G. Winckler at Riri's, at the corner of Rue de Chazelles and Rue Jadin, in the seventeenth arrondissement, only a few streets away from the Rue Cardinet, from the bridge from which G. Simpson jumped, or so it was rumoured, under a train, and two metro stops from Place Clichy, where the unnamed character of UHQD waits for the rain to stop. Furthermore they both spend their time, in the café of their choice, reading the newspaper "ligne à ligne" (G. Winckler, p. 53, G. Simpson, p. 302).

Both are prisoners:

G. Winckler	G. Simpson
"ne descendit plus que pour prendre ses repas chez Riri [...]	"se mit à rester chez lui" [...]
La dernière année, il ne sortit plus du tout de chez lui." (Vme, 52-54)	"les derniers six mois, il ne sortit pratiquement plus jamais de sa chambre" (Vme, 305)

They occupy their time playing solitary games: G. Simpson playing a patience which consists in re-ordering the set of cards according to symbols and colours, G. Winckler tries to find possible classifications for the hotel labels Smautf has brought back for him but, like Simpson, he never manages to finish the game. It is almost as if Winckler embodies at the end of his life what the character of UHQD was striving for. If we compare the following two images:

Il s'asseyait sur un banc, les pieds joints, le menton appuyé sur le pommeau de sa canne qu'il agrippait à deux mains et restait là, pendant une heure deux, sans bouger, regardant devant lui".
(Vme, 52)

Dans les jardins du Luxembourg, tu regardes [...] sur un banc, non loin de toi, un vieillard momifié, immobile, les pieds joints, le menton appuyé sur le pommeau de sa canne qu'il agrippe à deux mains, regarde devant lui dans le vide, pendant des heures. Tu l'admires. Tu cherches son secret [...]. Tu voudrais y parvenir".
(UHQD, 61)

Winckler has learnt what the unnamed character of UHQD perhaps only learns at the end of his experience, when he waits for the rain to stop - patience (cf. UHQD, 54). It is interesting to note that in this he reverts back to his homonym in Le Condottiere, for whom patience is one of the few qualities he has and that it also the quality that distinguishes Winckler from Bartlebooth whose "impatience" (Vme, 340) is one of the disavantages which allow Winckler to get the better of him.

At a different level UHQD is constructed as a puzzle, a work of découpe and collage of fragments from other works which resembles Winkler's work as a puzzle-maker. Significant, perhaps, is the fact that the character of UHQD "préfère(s) être la pièce manquante du puzzle" (UHQD, 45) and the final image of Vme shows us a W shaped piece of puzzle, Winckler's signature and the last sign of his revenge over Bartlebooth. In comparison to the unnamed character of UHQD Winckler can then be considered as a true artist since he has learnt how to incorporate other people's work (in his case Bartlebooth's) in such a way as to assert his own art as a "personal" creation. In this sense the "Winckler" character of UHQD had the seeds of a real artist (the idea, often mentioned by Perec, of literature as a puzzle), although, unlike his counterpart, he did not quite master this technique.

In the end, words and sentences not only function the same way as the objects in narrative paintings, suggesting associations that would otherwise remain latent, but they also suggest cross-boundary itineraries that link together Perec's works in a sort of polyptych, or series of works, like "The Legend of Saint Ursula" or, by the same artist, "The Triumph of Saint George".

c) The Genre portrait

One feature of the genre portrait is that it depicts a type of person with whom the viewer can readily identify or, at least, whose qualities or vices are shared by many people around him.

In order to define the literary equivalent of genre portrait it is necessary to introduce E.M. Forster's distinction between "flat" and "round" characters (Forster 1927, 93-112). The flat character is the one who is "built around one idea or quality", with no psychological depth; the round character is a complex one, who develops throughout the novel and who is recognisable by his ability to surprise us convincingly.

The literary tradition of typified round characters is embodied by the 19th-century "psychological" novel where the author establishes types of behaviour (the young social climber, the artist, the thief, etc.), then gives a psycho-sociological interpretation of it by describing his actions and the setting in which he moves but also by making explicit interpretative statements.

In Vme the distinction between flat and round characters is more complex. First of all characters that may be defined as "round" do not comply entirely with the conventional definition. Bartlebooth, for instance, has a slight depth, as the reader is given an insight into his motivations ("Imaginons un homme...", Vme, 156-160), and he develops, at least retrospectively, in Valène's memory, throughout the novel. Yet his character is built around the sole idea of his project whilst many aspects of his life and personality remain a mystery. Similarly, flat characters have the ability to surprise us on some occasions.

Secondly, some characters, if not all, can be defined as types: the artist (Hutting), the actress (Olivia Norv ell), the mad inventor (Morellet), the country doctor (Dinteville), the young penniless couple who dream of a fancy bedroom (the Réols), the resourceful money-makers (the Plassaerts), the well-off and fashionable civil servants (the Louvets), and so forth.

However, the typification is not of the Balzacian kind as there is very little psychological interpretation. Characterization of the type is made mainly through the

description of clothes and the setting in which the character moves and also, occasionally, through his actions and his relationship with the others. In this sense the character, like Saint Jerome, is placed at the centre of a system of symbols and connections which gives the reader the opportunity to identify him.

Moreover, characters often present absurd features so that they become not only types but also caricatures, almost as if they were used as allegories of existing people. These caricatures take the form of either stating the obvious, or of exaggeration. In the first instance, Perec describes in detail perfectly ordinary situations amongst less ordinary ones (see, for example, the daily time-schedule of the Bergers, Ch. LXI, the epitome of shift-workers who never see each other but pretend to have a normal family life, and Monsieur Fresnel's life, Ch. LV). In the second case one feature is exaggerated to the absurd. Bartlebooth's life, to mention but the most obvious example, might seem rather mad but many people's life is centred around horse-racing, collecting strange objects or equally futile occupations.

This caricaturisation inserts a distance between the characters and the reader, but, somewhat like the Brechtian notion of distance, it makes them more real and more sympathetic. The following passage from Lucien's Goldmann's Pour une sociologie du roman may help understanding this point:

> "Le structuralisme génétique a représenté un changement totale d'orientation, son hypothèse fondamentale étant précisément que le caractère collectif de la création littéraire provient du fait que les structures de l'univers de l'oeuvre sont homologues aux structures mentales de certains groupes sociaux ou en relation intellegibles avec elles, alors que sur le plan du contenu, c'est-à-dire de la création d'univers imaginaires régis par ces structures, l'écrivain a une liberté totale".
>
> (Goldmann 1964, 345)

This is also one of the reasons why Perec's description of character, based mainly on objects and setting, does not fall into the mould of Robbe-Grillet. In fact in Robbe-Grillet's novels it is the reader, not the author, who takes upon himself to

provide a psychological interpretation. His characters, far from being deprived of depth, are just unsympathetic and do not leave room for an identification of the self or of the other. Writing about Bruce Morisette's essay on Robbe-Grillet, Perec says:

> "ce n'est pas au niveau des significations (sociales, politiques, etc.) que Robbe-Grillet s'est d'abord trompé mais bel et bien au niveau du langage: il avait oublié qu'il en était responsable."
>
> (Partisans, n° 11, 170)

Perec does not forget. This is clearer in some of his earlier works, such as LC or UHQD, where each word is "injected" with sense. Asked if his first novel was anything like Robbe-Grillet's, Perec answers:

> "Robbe-Grillet s'en tient à une description en surface; il utilise des mots très neutres [...], ou bien des mots chargés psychanalytiquement [...]. J'ai voulu, au contraire, que mes mots soient "injectés" de sens, chargés de résonances."
>
> (BM 1965, 15)

But, whereas in LC the characters are devoid of any individuality but, through objects and language, they are clearly readable, in Vme, the mechanism of (self)-identification works in a slightly different manner.

The use of different styles (scientific, dictionary entries, epistolary, dialogue, etc.) authenticates the character and endows him with connotations that would otherwise be absent. Moreover, characters are not only caricatures, as mentioned earlier, but irony is introduced when adjectives of contrasting meaning are used in the same description. Olivia Norv ell's nephew is first presented as an extremely refined young man:"vêtu avec un raffinement qui n'est certainement pas de son âge" (Vme, 469).

Then follows a description of his clothes which does everything but prove this statement to be true:

> "une chemise blanche largement ouverte, un gilet écossais, un blouson de cuir, un foulard abricot et un blue-jeansocre pris dans de larges bottes texanes."
> (Vme, 469)

In other words, Perec's use of language likens him to genre painters such as Antonello da Messina, Metsys or, to a certain extent, to Bosch. Like these painters Perec uses symbols borrowed from different sources and the superimposition of signs with different meaning. The results are types that are readily recognisable but, at the same time, idiosyncratic - almost as if he placed in front of the reader a magic mirror in which one can distinguish, amongst the absurd, reflections of the real.

c) Perec's use of still lifes

In 19th-century literature, objects often have an informative function: they help to establish the setting in which the character moves (Balzac's Pension Vauquer), they explain an aspect of the character's personality (Flaubert's Madame Bovary), they unleash memory or dreams (Proust's "madeleines"). Michel Butor in his essay "Philosophie de l'ameublement" (1964), traces the history of Man through the objects described in literary works. According to his theory, in pre-revolutionary novels, objects were scarce, then they acquired a greater place but authors privileged ugly objects to express the ugliness of society. In this sense the writer is first of all an "interior designer" since his first task is to create a setting in which the characters can move at ease and which reflects also the society in which he (or his characters) live.

Some of Perec's objects form a pictogram, in particular those which come into his early works (LC, UHQD). In Vme some objects fulfil this role. As we have seen, they become symbols or attributes of one character and help to explain his/her personality or his/her relationship with other characters. In this case the object is unique and full of meaning. Often the uniqueness of the object is indicated in the text, as in the following examples:

> "Philippe [Marquiseaux] dut se résoudre à vendre à un antiquaire de la rue de Lille *le seul objet véritablement*

> *précieux qu'il eût jamais possédé*: une mandore du XVIIe siècle".
>
> (Vme, 179)

> "[M. Jérôme] la tête appuyée sur *la seule chose qu'il ait rapportée de ses années hindoues*: un lambeau - à peine plus grand qu'un mouchoir - d'une étoffe *jadis somptueuse*, à fond pourpre, brodée de fils d'argent".
>
> (Vme, 266)

> "un théorbe à caisse ovale [...]. C'est *le seul objet* qu'Olivier Gratiolet emporta du haras après l'assassinat de sa femme et le suicide de son beau-père".
>
> (Vme, 488)

(My italics)

The collectomania that affects so many characters in the novel is an expression of the uniqueness of the object and also it expresses a need for holding on to fragments of the past. Significantly there are no less than three collections of clocks and watches: Lady Forthright's (Ch. IV), Madame Marcia's and the American watch-maker's (Ch. LXVI). Madame Albin is not a collector as such but, like some of the collectors, she keeps, carefully wrapped in newspaper, objects that belong to her past. The connection, though, is not always clear, and as she is losing her memory, sometimes she wraps up old cartons of fruit juice.

The reader experiences the same confusion as objects are repeated (to name just one example Madame Grifalconi and Madame Fresnel both have a "cafetière d'émail bleu" (Vme, 159 and 50) ; they can be fakes or reproductions like James Sherwood's Holy Vase (Ch. XXII), or Grifalconi's golden billhook (Ch. XXVII) which has had its handle re-made. Sometimes the description includes warnings against the authenticity of the objects, signified by words like "imitant", ressemble", "semble", etc.:

> "un haut cylindre de plâtre peint *imitant* une colonne antique."
>
> (Vme, 332)

> "une petite suspension aux branches de cuivre ajouré qui *semble une copie* en réduction d'un lustre d'intérieur hollandais."
>
> (Vme, 334)
>
> (My italics)

But objects do not always play a significant role in the chapter. The description can be an expression of Perec's attention to detail which likens him to Renaissance artists. Moreover his constant concern for space is partly a concern for "filling" space. In Vme Perec is both the novelist-interior designer, as Butor intended it, but also he accumulates objects with the sole purpose of filling, or rather saturating, space - the space of the room and that of the page.

It is an approach that seems more similar to that of Pop Art than to traditional still lifes, where every object has its place and its raison d'être in the painting. In Pop Art, on the contrary, the "Art of Assemblage" (37) plays a very important part. The idea springs from the realisation that any object, even the most ugly one, can be (and must be) represented on canvas, as art should represent reality and not glorify it. For the same reason the composition assembles objects that do not necessarily relate to each other and does not privilege one object over an other, a little like, in Jean Paris's eyes, the objects in Baugin's "Nature morte" are held together only by chance.

A second consideration was that, with the development of industry and therefore of mass-production, objects became perishable and ephemeral - hence the attempt to make them stay, through art, in people's memory (38). Perec himself sees in this accumulation of fragments of reality an expression of our "phobia" of forgetting:

> "Nous vivons dans un monde qui est hanté par sa propre disparition, qui passe donc son temps à accumuler les preuves de son existence".
>
> (JR1979, 139)

The use of the "ready made" (objects, posters, photos, etc.) incorporated in the work of art is for the Pop Artist, as it was for Marcel Duchamp who first used this technique, an appropriation, or theft ("le geste du vol", Huyghe and Rudel 1969, 386)

of fragments of the real. This leaves the artist free to reconstruct reality:

> "La conséquence en est la liberté extrême de l'artiste, qui s'identifie à l'enfant jouant et construisant avec tous les objets qui l'attirent."
>
> (Huyghe et Rudel 1969, 383)

Perec seems to take up Duchamp's statement when speaking of the tiny variations in Kürz's Gallery Picture, he makes Nowak write:

> "Il ne s'agit pas [...] d'une 'liberté de l'artiste' [...] mais, bien au contraire, d'un processus d'incorporation, d'un accaparement: en même temps projection vers l'Autre, et Vol, au sens prométhéen du terme."
>
> (UCDA, 84)

In Vme Perec seems to apply all of these principles. The description of Chapter XCIV: "Tentative d'inventaire de quelques-unes des choses qui ont eté trouvées dans les escaliers au fil des ans" (Vme, 564-67) includes perfectly ordinary objects ("six sous-verres de liège"), the reproduction of fragments of the real ("une carte d'abonnement hebdomadaire valable sur la ligne de petite ceinture"), the ready-made ("un rectangle de bristol ..." comes from Thomas Mann), and non- hierarchisation:

> "un imperméable portant la marque 'Caliban', fabriqué à Londres par la Maison Hemminge & Condell,/six sous-verres de liège verni représentant de hauts-lieux parisiens: le palais de l'Elysée, la Chambre des députés, le Sénat, Notre-Dame, le Palais de Justice et l'Hôtel de Invalides,/un collier de vertèbres d'alose,/[...] un rectangle de bristol à peu près du format d'une carte de visite, portant imprimé d'un côté: *Did you ever see the devil with a nightcap on ?* et de l'autre: *No I never saw the devil with night-cap on!*/[...] un poisson rouge dans une poche de plastique à demi remplie d'eau, accrochée à la poignée de la porte de Madame de Beaumont,/une carte d'abonnement hebdomadaire valable sur la ligne de 'petite ceinture' (PC)".
>
> (Vme, 564-65)

Objects, especially when they are included in lists, carry within themselves the idea of death and memory. In Rorschash's apartment (Ch. XCV) objects seem to participate in their owner's imminent death:

> "les objets, les bibelots attendent cette mort à venir, l'attendent avec une indifférence polie, bien rangés, bien propres, figés une fois pour toutes dans un silence impersonnel: le dessus-de-lit parfaitement tiré, la petite table, [...] le très beau verre de cristal taillé [...]".
>
> (Vme, 569-70)

Similarly in Cyrille Altamont's study we find only "choses figées et mortes" (Ch. LXIX); Madame de Beaumont's cellar is full of old things and souvenirs (Ch. LXXVI). Valène's attempt to remember and depict the life of the apartment-block is an attempt to fix all the objects (and their owners) in eternity and postpone death:

> "L'idée même de ce tableau qu'il projetait de faire [...] lui faisait l'effet d'un mausolée grotesque dressé à la mémoire de comparses pétrifiés dans des postures ultimes [...] comme s'il avait voulu à la fois prévenir et retarder ces morts lentes ou vives qui, d'étage en étage, semblaient vouloir envahir la maison toute entière".
>
> (Vme, 168)

Needless to say, often his attempt not to forget the inhabitants of the building coincides with a list of objects, although these, in Valene's memory do not always belong to the right person (see pp.175-176 below). In this sense Perec's descriptions or enumerations of objects may be seen as an exaggeration of vanitas, as they act as a reminder of the vanity of life and as time deployers, fixing the objects in eternity.

Such a philosophy of the object is probably best expressed by the list. Indeed an early version of Bartlebooth's life included the task of estimating the value of the planet Earth, hence list and price everything:

> "Bartlebooth [...] avait eu un autre projet: fonder une société qui estimerait le prix de la planète Terre. Mettons que des extra-terrestres veuillent l'acheter ...

> On commence un inventaire: un ouvre-boîte, cinq centimes, la Joconde, quatorze milliards, tel caillou: tant! Bartlebooth abandonna ce projet et moi-même j'en parle pas."
>
> (PL 1978)

Listing, like collecting, is one of the means of appropriation and also it physically fills the space of the page with little fragments of reality, sometimes organised but mostly juxtaposed in no particular order.

Like collections, the idea of the list also implies that of memory. Shopping lists or diary entries, for examples, are made to remind oneself what to buy or what to do. Philippe Hamon defines the list as a "memorandum" rather less prosaically:

> "De nombreuses comptines, fondées sur le principe de la déclinaison, jusqu'à saturation, d'une liste close à apprendre par coeur (l'alphabet, les nombres jusqu'à 10, les voyelles, les notes de la gamme, etc.) sont à la fois des descriptions et des objets pédagogiques mnémotechniques".
>
> (Hamon 1981, 61)

In the end, only a small percentage of the objects are actually described. Perec, like Verne, prefers to list, catalogue and name. A couple of instances are of particular interest: (a) the close-up and (b) the biographical detail.

(a) The close-up may be illustrated through the description of the first object Emilio Grifalconi gives to Valène:

> "il [Grifalconi] fit venir le peintre chez lui et posa sur la table un coffret oblong en cuir vert. Ayant allumé un projecteur accroché au plafond pour éclairer le coffret, il l'ouvrit: une arme reposait sur la doublure d'un rouge éclatant, sa poignée lisse en frêne, sa lame plate, falciforme, en or. 'Savez-vous ce que c'est?' demanda-t-il. Valène leva les sourcils en signe d'ignorance. 'C'est la serpe d'or, la serpe dont les druides gaulois se servaient pour cueillir le gui'. Valène regarda Grifalconi d'un air incrédule mais l'ébéniste ne parut

> pas se démonter. "Le manche, c'est moi qui l'ai fabriqué, bien sûr, mais la lame est authentique; elle a été trouvée dans une tombe aux environs d'Aix; il paraît qu'elle est caractéristique du travail des Salyens." Valène examina la lame de plus près; sept minuscules gravures étaient finement ciselées sur une des faces, mais il ne parvint pas à voir ce qu'elles représentaient, même en s'aidant d'une forte loupe; il vit seulement que sur plusieurs d'entre elles, il y avait vraisemblablement une femme aux cheveux très longs."
>
> (Vme, 162)

The description is extremely powerful and expresses both the preciousness of the object itself and Emilio Grifalconi's attachment to it. Edgar Morin in Le Cinéma ou l'homme imaginaire (1965, 57-60) explains that, on the screen, objects seen in close-up are perceived not with the eye but with the heart. Objects thus acquire a "soul". He then applies this concept to Eisenstein's General Line: the power of the scene alternating the fountain and the expressions on the peasants' faces lies in the close-up and also in the alternation of objects and humans which operates a transfer of "soul" from one to the other.

The description of the golden billhook works in a similar manner: on one side an object so minutely carved that Valène has to look closer and closer (the zoom effect) to discover part of his beauty; on the other side Valène's reaction: curiosity, surprise, fascination.

(b) The description of some of the objects takes the form of a physical description but also, to be complete, it has to include its origins, its fabrication, its life. This is the case, for example, of Winckler's witches mirrors and of his diabolical rings, of Bartlebooth's coffee jars, of Grifalconi's two precious objects and even of Bartlebooth's 500 puzzles which are never really described (apart from a few fragments) but of which we know almost every minute of their life.

It implies, perhaps, a notion of the passing of time as we see the object at different stages of its life, but, above all, it implies that a description cannot be

complete without a mention of the story attached to it. In both cases it questions the object and our perception of it.

d) Perec's use of landscape

The space of Vme is very deceptive: allegedly the description of a locus solus (the apartment-block) it involves the mention or the description of over 650 other places. For most of these places it is a case of nomenclatura: they are simply named in connection with a character or an object going to or coming from somewhere else or as titles of books and paintings or just as names on a map. The landscape is thus transformed into itinerary: like Giorgione's "Tempest" the mere presence of all the possible landscapes signifies voyage. In Eses, namely in the chapter entitled "Le Monde", Perec defines travelling in a similar fashion: the geographical space is created by the displacement of objects:

> "Ou bien, plutôt, voir, très loin de son lieu supposé d'origine, un objet parfaitement laid, par exemple une boîte en coquillages portant 'Souvenir de Dinard' dans un chalet de la Forêt-Noire, ou parfaitement commun, tel un cintre marqué 'Hôtel Saint-Vincent, Commercy' dans un bed and breakfast d'Inverness, ou parfaitement improbable, comme le *Répertoire archéologique du Département du Tarn*, rédigé par Mr. H. Crozes, Paris, 1865, in-4, 123 p., dans le salon d'une pension de famille à Regensburg (plus connue en France sous le nom de Ratisbonne)."
>
> (Eses, 104)

The names of the places mentioned do not necessarily situate them geographically as they are sometimes imaginary or obscure, sometimes reconstructed by other people (Appenzzell, Ch. XXV), something else that reminds us of the mysterious setting of the "Tempest".

Sometimes, on the contrary, naming a place can, in itself, evoke a landscape. Lists of places in Vme do not always evoke a landscape but they can assume different functions. In P/C Perec writes:

> "Il y a dans toute énumération deux tentations contradictoires; la première est de TOUT recenser, la seconde d'oublier tout de même quelque chose; la première voudrait clotûrer définitivement la question, la seconde la laisser ouverte; entre l'exhaustif et l'inachevé, l'énumeration me semble ainsi être, avant toute pensée [...] la marque même de ce besoin de nommer et de réunir sans lequel le monde ("la vie") resterait pour nous sans repères."
>
> (P/C, 167)

Three examples of geographical lists illustrate this point:

First of all transcription, which is part of a process of re-creating a familiar space: not making out a list but copying a list of names like, for instance, the names on a map of France and its colonies that hangs on the wall of the author's study (Vme, 260; information from David Bellos).

The second case is cataloguing and it is close to the tendency on which Perec commented: "oublier tout de même quelque chose". When Bartlebooth classes the pieces of puzzles (that were once paintings and before that direct experience of the place) according to shape and colour he no longer "sees" the port he once painted, he is cataloguing bits of wood. Listing corresponds to lack of vision and, in this case, lack of memory.

It can also mean its opposite: a mnemonic exercise, in Philippe Hamon's sense, a retrieval of memory. The following list, enumerating Valène's recollections of the life of the apartment-block, exemplifies this kind of exercise:

> "les louches et les couteaux, les écumoires, les boutons de porte, les livres , les journaux, les carpettes, les carafes, les chenets, les porte-parapluies, les dessous-de-plat , les postes de radio [...]".
>
> (Vme, 291)

Such a list tests Valène's memory and also that of the reader, as all these details come in somewhere else in the text (39).

Memory can also change the perception of things. This is the difference, for

example, between Bartlebooth and Smautf who have travelled together for twenty years:

> "Pour Smautf, qui les apercevait sur la grande table carrée couverte d'un drap noir [...] les puzzles restaient encore liés à des bouffées de souvenirs, des odeurs de varech, des bruits de vagues se fracassant le long de hautes digues, des noms lointains".
>
> (Vme, 167)

> "[Bartlebooth] avait regardé ces paysages de bord de mer avec une attention suffisamment intense pour que vingt ans plus tard il lui suffise de lire [...] "Ile de Skye" [...] pour que s'impose aussitôt le souvenir d'un marin en chandail jaune [...]: non pas le souvenir lui-même - car il était trop évident que ces souvenirs n'avaient existé que pour être aquarelles d'abord, et puzzles plus tard et de nouveau plus rien - mais souvenirs d'images, de traits de crayon, coups de gomme, touches de pinceaux."
>
> (Vme, 416)

Some names are accompanied by a few words of description and become explicit landscapes. These may be grouped together according to four common denominators: memory, dream, images and fiction.

Memory

Mademoiselle Crespi in Chapter LXXXIII:

> "ferme les yeux et elle revoit le paysage qu'il y avait devant la fenêtre de la pièce où tout le monde se tenait: le mur fleuri de bougainvilliers, la pente où poussaient des touffes d'euphorbe, la haie de figuiers de Barbarie, l'espalier des câpriers".
>
> (Vme, 498)

Madame Moreau in Chapter LXXI:

> "revoyait la venue du vieux bouilleur qui arrivait de Buzançais avec son alambic de cuivre rouge tiré par

> une petite jument noire qui répondait au nom de Belle; et l'arracheur de dents avec son bonnet rouge et ses prospectus multicolores; et le joueur de cornemuse qui l'accompagnait et qui soufflait dans ses tuyaux le plus fort possible et horriblement faux pour couvrir les cris des malheureux patients."
>
> (Vme, 425)

The contrast between the two characters' childhood memories and their situation - Mademoiselle Crespi lives in a maid's room which is not even described, Madame Moreau in a modern and sophisticated apartment entirely designed by an architect - invests the memory with nostalgia and deepens our understanding of the character.

The second memory is of particular interest since it is also a visual quotation from Bosch, the "Hay Wagon": to Madame Moreau's memory of childhood corresponds, in writing, the author's memory of a painting. Similarly many descriptions of landscapes stand out for their style, often more poetic than usual. The description of Carel van Loorens' travels on page 463 ("Diomira...") differs substantially from Perec's "flat" style. In fact, it comes from Calvino's Invisible Cities (pp. 15, 28 and 95). Once again, behind the character's memory lies Perec's memory of reading.

Another example of landscape that can be transformed by memory is the description of London in the letter written by Cyrille Altamont to his wife. To the place is attached the memory of an event (Blanche's abortion) that will change their lives quite drastically. The description plays on the clichés normally used for English life - the sameness and orderliness of the streets, tea and toast, the pubs and the bobbies. Only in this case the description, seen through the eyes of somebody who is waiting for his wife-to-be to come out of hospital seems to be full of grotesque characters and places: the couple in the pub, the cinema, the long rows of identical houses (40).

Dreams

Mademoiselle Crespi provides an example of oneiric landscape. In the "annunciation" dream (Ch. XVI) she sees an alpine landscape:

> "un lac dont le disque, entouré de forêts, est gelé et couvert de neige; derrière sa rive la plus éloignée les plans inclinés des montagnes semblent se rencontrer et au-delà des pics couverts de neige s'étagent dans le bleu du ciel. Au premier plan, trois personnes gravissent un sentier menant à un cimetière au centre duquel une colonne surmontée d'une vasque d'onyx jaillit d'un massif de lauriers et d'aucubas."
>
> (Vme, 87)

The first part of the dream, as we have seen, echoes the composition of "Saint Ursula". What is omitted is the inscription on the saint's pillow, "IN-FAN-NTIA", an omission which provides the missing link between dream and memory.

An other example would be that of Marguerite Winckler:

> "Une seule fois elle lui raconta qu'elle avait revu dans un rêve la maison des champs où elle avait passé tous ses étés d'adolescente: une grande bâtisse blanche envahie de clématites, avec un grenier qui lui faisait peur, et une petite charrette tirée par un âne qui répondait au doux prénom de Boniface."
>
> (Vme, 312)

Again the dream is a memory of childhood, and, like Mademoiselle Crespi's memory in Chapter LXXXIII, it takes the form of a visual, fragment as if (childhood) memories were nothing but strong images.

Images

Often memories become images: Madame Albin shows Madame Orlowska a postcard representing the palace she had built in Syria; Bartlebooth shows the same Madame Orlowska a puzzle of one of the ports he once painted. A great majority of the paintings described incorporate quotations from the twenty authors in the Quotations

List, or to use Magné's definition, they act as "embrayeurs de récits". To quote but one example, Louis Foulerot's painting on page 283 - "Tout au fond miroite un lac ...dominent l'eau" - includes a quotations from Calvino's Invisible Cities (p. 59) (41).

Imaginary landscapes

G. Berger in Chapter LXVIII is reading a Tintin book illustrating the fictional biography of Carel van Loorens. During his travels he is engaged by Napoleon I to approach the Barbary corsair, Hokab-el-Ouakt, and to persuade him to collaborate with the French against the English maritime hegemony. Loorens gains the corsair's trust by telling him stories from his travels

> "Loorens racontait ses aventures à l'Arabe et lui décrivait les villes fabuleuses où il avait séjourné: Diomira, la ville aux soixante coupoles d'argent, Isaura la ville aux cent puits, Smeraldine la ville aquatique et Moriane avec ses portes d'albâtre transparentes à la lumière du soleil, ses colonnes de corail soutenant des frontons incrustés de serpentine, ses villas toute de verre comme des aquariums où les ombres des danseuses à l'écaille argentée nageaient sous les lampadaires en forme de méduse."
>
> (Vme, 463)

Like Marco Polo in Calvino's Invisible Cities from which this passage is taken (pp. 15, 28, 95 and 111), "raconter une histoire" and "décrire un lieu" are almost synonyms. These four categories of landscapes (memory, dreams, images and fiction) have in common the fact that they are all more or less active, more or less conscious reconstructions of the past or projections towards an imaginary world, all introduced by 'markers' like "fermer les yeux", "rêver", "raconter", etc. Just as the building incorporates hundreds of other places, the mind becomes a mirror that incorporates different spaces. It may be seen as an expression of self-made geography:

> "le sentiment de la concrétude du monde: quelque chose de clair, de plus proche de nous: le monde non plus comme un parcours sans cesse à refaire, non pas

> comme une course sans fin, un défi sans cesse à relever, non pas comme le seul prétexte d'une accumulation désespérante, ni comme l'illusion d'une conquête, mais comme retrouvaille d'un sens, perception d'une écriture terrestre, d'une *géographie* dont nous avons oublié que nous sommes les auteurs."
> (Eses, 105) (42)

As in pre-18th-century painting, landscape is not an element in its own right: it represents the mental space in which one contemplates the fragments of experience and, for Perec, experience is also, or perhaps mainly, an experience of reading, be it a book or a painting.

Chapter 4

"Visible" Art

a) An inventory of art works mentioned in Vme.

Perec's treatment of character, objects and setting bears a substantial resemblance to the portraits, still lifes and landscapes of the ten artists of list-pair 17. Another way in which Perec's writing may be compared to these artists is in the use of symbols. As we have seen, an affinity in method may be seen in the "conventional" symbolism which is often intentionally distorted by the ten artists and by Perec. A further similarity may be seen in the use of symbols which do not pertain to the medium used, namely the use of writing in painting and the use of painting in writing. This chapter will deal with icons and symbols in painting and literature and with "visible" art in Vme, that is to say the paintings which appear on the surface of the novel.

Over and above the insertion of fragments from the list of ten paintings discussed in Chapter 3, the profusion of "iconic objects" which populate the apartment-block (wallpapers, bedcovers, blotters, playing cards, biscuit tins, etc.) and which are carriers of iconographical information, and excluding art forms such as photography, architecture, sculpture, or film, Vme counts at least 700 art works, by 155 artists (100 of whom are known artists).

Considering the scope of the subject, an analysis of the ekphrastic representation in Vme, must begin with an inventory of art works in the text. Bernard Magné has started off this game with his iconographical survey (Magné 1985a, 232-33). It is worth completing the count here.

A first attempt to classify them according to the technique of their production would result in the following list (1):

Technique	No.	Remarks	Artist	Period	Subject	Page no. (Cat. no.)*
Drawing	1		Priou		Portrait	409 (69c)
	1		Perpignani		Portrait	573 (95a)
	1		Anon		Landscape	573 (95d)
	1x2	Recto-verso	Bellmer	Contemporary		44-45 (7)
	1	Pencil on envelope	Valène S.	Contemporary	Portrait	221 (38)
	2	Sketch	Cormon F.	Late 1800	Animal subject	492 (83a)
		Sketch	Perugino	1400-1500		492 (83b)
	1	Pastel sketch	Ducreux J.	1700-1800	Portrait	573 (95f)
	1	Charcoal and pastel	Carmontelle	1700-1800	Portrait	398 (66b)
	2	Pen drawing	Anon		Portrait	69 (13)
		Pen drawing	Thorwaldsson		Portrait	175 (29b)
	1	Pen and Ink drawing	Valène S.	Contemporary	Portrait	159 (27)
	1	Entirely made with a typewriter	Plattner	Contemporary	Portrait	471 (79a)
	2	Rebus	Gratiolet O.	Contemporary		347 (58)
		Rebus	Anon		Historical subject	453 (76)
	16					
Painting		Unfinished	Lucero	Contemporary	Portrait	207-209 (34a)
	3	Unfinished	Valène	Contemporary	Cross-sectioned building	290-98 (51)
		Unfinished	Hutting	Contemporary	Mythological subject	585-86 (97c)
	1		Anon		Still life	32 (4a)
	1		Anon		Landscape	32 (4b)
	1		Anon		Animal subject	33 (4c)
	4		Le Meriadech'		Landscape	108-09 (21)
	1		Anon		Historical subject	
	1		Anon		Genre portrait	140 (24b,c,d)
	1		Anon			
	1		Pellerin	1800	Portrait	140-41 (24e)
	1		Anon		Landscape	141 (24g)
	2		Anon	1600	Landscape	200 (32c)
	1	Pseudo-naive	Anon	Contemporary	Interior	268-69 (47b)
	1		Foulerot L.	Contemporary	Narrative portrait	284-85 (50)
	25	Potential painting	Hutting F.	Contemporary	Portrait	350-52 (59b,c)
	1		Berger	Contemporary	Landscape	367 (61)
	1	Hyper-realist	Anon		Still life	372 (62)
	1		Morrel d'Hoaxville	1800	Portrait	409 (69a)
	1	Hyper-realist	Trapp O.	Contemporary	Group portrait	409 (69b)
	1		Anon		Portrait	422 (71b)
	1	Facsimile "fin-de-siècle" poster	Anon		Group portrait	457 (77a)
	1		Anon		Still life	457 (77b)

*The number in brackets refers to the "Catalogue of art works in Vme" (Vol. 2, pp. 249-295)

Technique	No.	Remarks	Artist	Period	Subject	Page no. (Cat. no.)*
Paintings (cdt.)	1		Groziano	1400-1500	Religious subject	516 (87a)
	1		Gainsborough T.	1700	Portrait	516 (87c)
	1		Lami E.	1800	Mythological scene	516 (87g)
	1		Montalescot L.N.		Seascape	516 (87h)
	2		Maston J.T.		Genre portrait	532-33 (88a,b)
	1		Anon		Still life	545
	1		Bidou		Portrait	574 (96)
	2	Action painting	Collective	Contemporary	Abstract	583-4 (97a,b)
	7	Used for comparison	Bosch H.	1400-1500	Group portrait	39 (6b)
		"	Malevich K.	Contemporary	Abstract	64 (11g)
		"	Wattau J.A.	1600-1700	Portrait	200 (32b)
		"	Botticelli S.	1400-1500	Portrait	200 (32d)
		"	La Tour G. de	1600	Group portrait	267 (47a)
		"	Carmontelle	1700-1800	Portrait	398 (66b)
		"	Greuze J.B.	1700-1800	Portrait	558 (92b)
	5	Puzzle	Anon		Historical subject	251 (44a)
		Puzzle	Anon		Genre portrait	251 (44b)
		Puzzle	Anon		Animal subject	251 (44c)
		Puzzle	Pissarro	Late 1800		16, 249
		Puzzle	Pollock J.	1900		16, 249
	72					
Paint on wood	1		Anon	1800	Book illustration	512 (86a)
	1		Mans F.H.	1600	Seascape	516 (87b)
	2					
Gouache	1	Puzzle	Winckler M.	Contemporary	Historical subject	252 (44d)
Watercolour	501	Puzzle	Bartlebooth P.	Contemporary	Seascape	Place and/or date specifically mentioned on pp. 64 (11k), 340 (57), 416-20 (70a, c-g), 598 (99a)

Technique	No.	Remarks	Artist	Period	Subject	Page no. (Cat. no.)*
Watercolour (cdt.)	1		Turner J.M.W.	1700-1800	Seascape	64 (11j)
	1		Owen U.N.		Genre portrait	92 (18)
	1		Anon		Genre portrait	142 (24i)
	1		Anon		Group portrait	218 (37)
	1		Anon		Still-life	359
	1		Anon		Group portrait	381 (64)
	1		Wainewright	1800	Portrait	516 (87i)
	508					
Retouched photograph	**1**		Winckler M.	Contemporary	Group portrait	22 (1) and 308 (53a)
Engraving	1	Copy of part of Bosch's "L'Escamoteur"	Anon		Portrait	39 (6a)
	1		Anon		Portrait	85 (15)
	1		Anon		Erotic scene	141 (24f)
	9		Jeanne de Chenany		Book illustration	224 (39a)
	1		Anon		Religious subject	257 (45d)
	1		Anon		Animal subject	397 (66a)
	1		Anon		Book illustration	406 (68)
	Various		Richmond H.	1800	Book illustration	410 (69d)
	1		Anon		Historical subject	432 (73a)
	1	Romantic	Anon		Book illustration	449 (75)
	1		Johannot T.	1800	Historical subject	473-74 (80)
	1		Anon		Group portrait	501 (84)
	2	1 surrealist	Anon		Portrait	512 (86b,c)
	2	Copies of two of Chardin's paintings	Le Bas	1600-1700	Portrait	516 (87f)
	21		Anon			561-63 (93)
	1		Anon		Group portrait	595 (98)
	at least 46					
Image d'Epinal	1		Anon		Historical subject	205 (33)
	2		Anon		Historical subject	598 (99b,c)
	3					

Technique	No.	Remarks	Artist	Period	Subject	Page no. (Cat. no.)*
Print	1		Anon		Transport	227 (39b)
	1	Chinese	Anon		Erotic scene	273 (48)
	2					
Miniature	2		Winckler M.	Contemporary	Landscape	309 (53b)
	2		Winckler M.	Contemporary	Portrait	312 (53d)
	1	Persian miniature on parchment	Anon		Portrait	398 (66d)
	2		Bembo B.	1400	"Religious" portrait	432 (73b)
	1	On ivory	Dumont F.	1700-1800	Portrait	573 (95g)
	8					
Japanese scroll	1		Attr. to Fujiwara Korefusa	12th century	Narrative portrait	139 (24a)
Multimedia	1		Martiboni	Contemporary	Abstract	499 (83c)
Caricatures	1		Blanchard J.E.		Historical subject	141 (24h)
	1		Falsten W.		Narrative portrait	175 (29c)
	16		Anon		Genre portrait	320 (54)
	1		Hill W.E.	Contemporary	Portrait	415 (70b)
	2		Anon		Narrative portrait	457 (77c,d)
	21					
Trompe-l'oeil	1		Anon		Interior	166 (28)
	1		Anon		Still life	173 (29a)
	2					
Reproductions	1	Black and white	Forbes S.A.	Contemporary	Narrative portrait	33-35 (4d)
	1		Silvestre I.	1600	Group portrait	48-49 (8)
			Anon			48
	2		Anon		Portrait	59 (9)
	1		Vasarely V.	1900		77 (14)
	1		Van der Weyden R.	1400	Religious subject	349 (59a)
		Postcard	Anon		Court portrait	152 (26)
	2	Postcard	Antonello da Messina	1400	Portrait	306 (52)
	1	Book illustration	Strasbourg School		Still life	181 (31)

Technique	No.	Remarks	Artist	Period	Subject	Page no. (Cat. no.)*
Reproductions (cdt.)	1	Book illustration	Zorzi da Castelfranco		Anatomical painting	342
	1	Invitation card	Silberselber		Landscape	199 (32a)
		Blotter	Oudry	1700	Animal subject	256 (45a)
	3	Blotter	Gerbault H.	1900	Illustration of song	256 (45b)
		Blotter	Anon		Portrait	497 (82)
	1	Table-mat	Roux A.	1800	Seascape	558 (92a)
	2	Biscuit-tin	Cezanne P.	Late 1800	Group portrait	422 (71a)
	18	Biscuit tin	Gérard F.	1700-1800	Mythological subject	556 (91)
Copies	1	Copy of part of Bosch's "L'Escamoteur	Anon		Group portrait	39 (6a)
	20	"Hazy" copies of famous paintings	Hutting F.	Contemporary		63 (11a,h)
	1	Copy of Turner's "Harbour near Tintagel"	Bartlebooth P.	Contemporary	Seascape	65 (11k)
	1	Copy of Delacroix' "Entrée des Croisés à Constantinople"	Dufay F.	1700-1800		572-73 (95b)
	23					

A classification that would account for subject matter or period of art history to which the paintings belong would necessarily be less exhaustive since art works are sometimes fictional, they are not always attributed or are mis-attributed. However, such an exercise may have its relevance:

Count per subject-matter:

59	Portraits
1	Anatomical painting
21	Genre portraits
12	Group portraits
5	Narrative portraits
7	Still lifes
5	Animal subjects
13	Landscapes
505	Seascapes
3	Abstract paintings
14	Illustrations of books, songs and legends
9	Historical subjects
3	Mythological subjects
5	Religious subjects (including 2 tarot cards)
23	Genre scenes
2	Erotic scenes
1	Transport

Count per period of Art History (for real artists only):

1400	Antonello,Van der Weyden
1400-1500	Bembo, Bosch, Botticelli, Giorgione, Perugino, Titian
1500-1600	Van Dyck
1600	Millet, Murillo, Rembrandt, Silvestre, La Tour
1600-1700	Chardin/Le Bas, Gillot, Oudry, Watteau
1700	Wainewright
1700-1800	Carmontelle, Dumont, Ducreux, Gainsborough, Greuze, Ingres, F. Gerard, Hubert Robert ., Roux, Turner
1800	Cormon, Géricault, Johannot, Lami, Meissonier, Pissarro

Impressionists: Cézanne, Manet

1900	The following artists are mentioned: Bonnat,Bellmer, Dubout, Dubuffet. Klee, Klein, Kline, Magritte, Morandi, Picasso, Pollock,Rothko, Stael, Stella, Vasarely.

Modern schools:

Abstract/Conceptual (Malevich, Martiboni)
Arte Brutta (Huffing)
Collective (Hutting)
Hazy painting (Hutting)
Hyperrealism
Potential (Hutting)
Pseudo-naïf
Surrealist
Verbalist

Such an exercise may seem as futile as Winckler's attempt to catalogue his collection of hotel labels:

> "Ce n'est pas seulement difficile, ajoutait Winckler, c'est surtout inutile: en laissant les étiquettes en vrac et en choisissant deux au hasard, on peut être sûr qu'elles auront toujours au moins trois points en commun."
>
> (Vme, 54)

Some general remarks may be made on the predominance of portraits and narrative paintings; on the fact that, contrary to all expectations, the incidence of Renaissance artists is equivalent to that of modern artists while a great number of paintings are from the romantic and the classical period; or, again, on the fact that the majority of the existing paintings are held in Paris (at the Louvre but also at the Orsay Museum and at the Carnavalet), or illustrate books (Jules Verne, Dumas, La Fontaine, etc.). A few paintings may be considered as almost "fetish" works as they figure also in Perec's previous works: Antonello's "Condottiere" (Le Condottiere, Wse, UHQD); Carpaccio's "Saint George and the Dragon" (LC), for the homonymy with the author; "Le Grand Défilé de la fête du Carrousel" (LC), the Genji monogatari scroll (Eses, PTG). But such remarks are of limited interest. The consideration that most evidently emerges from these inventories is that the sheer range of paintings is perhaps simply another indication of Perec's erudition in art history and of the variety of his interests, which did not dismiss popular and minor art forms. The different degrees to which the artists and their work affect the text and the fact that their presence may be determined also by other linguistic and thematic constraints, makes it impossible to treat them as a corpus or to draw overall conclusions about Perec's "artistic sources".

b) Review of Bernard Magné's account of the role of painting in Vme

Bernard Magné distinguished five modes of functioning for the "surface" paintings of Vme. Three of these modes have already been mentioned in the introduction of the present study (p. 11).

Magné sees the paintings in Vme as:

1) constraint integrators, providing a realistic setting into which to insert the disparate elements of the cahier des charges;

2) text-generators, having the opposite function to Hamon's windows, namely to introduce a narrative section instead of a descriptive one;

3) metatextual references to the act of writing;

(Magné 1985a, 235-43)

4) level flatteners to flatten out the distinction between the different levels of narration;

(Magné 1989a, 211-12)

5) transformers of meaning, to distort and multiply images in the text

(Magné 1989a, 211-12).

Useful as these categories are for clearing the ground, such all-purpose labels cannot be applied satisfactorily to any individual painting in Vme.

Perec's use of painting in Vme is, to a certain extent, not dissimilar from the use of writing in some of the author's painterly sources (Van Eyck, Holbein, Carpaccio). Similarly, the insertion of artists and art works in Vme belongs to a tradition of "ekphrastic" writing which Perec continued and reinvented. An exhaustive study of the use of writing in painting and of the literary tradition of ekphrasis goes beyond the scope of this thesis. However, it is essential to discuss these two aspects in relation some of Perec's painterly sources and to some of the 19th-century authors who are more clearly signposted as "ekphrastic" writers (Zola, Balzac, Proust). An analysis of Perec's use of fictional artists and of art works in this context seems to do more justice to this topic.

Icons and symbols

The conventional definition of icons and symbols, given by Charles Spencer Peirce (1879, 156-171) is based on a typology of the visual relationship between signs and the objects they designate. Icons represent by virtue of likeness to the object, whereas symbols work through arbitrary convention and habit. According to this definition icons pertain to the more or less figurative art, whilst all language systems are, broadly speaking, symbolic. There are, of course, exceptions: an icon may bear no visual resemblance to the object it signifies (for instance, the myrtle signifying conjugal love in Carpaccio's "Saint Ursula"); the written page may reproduce the sound or the physical appearance of the object (in onomatopoeia, carmina figurata, etc.).

The distinction between iconic and symbolic representation is less clear when they both occur within the same medium. Artists like Carpaccio, Van Eyck and Holbein used writing as part of the iconography of their paintings; likewise Perec's verbal descriptions of paintings are not entirely "symbolic".

The intrusion of the written word into the pictorial space is one of the major forces in the dynamics of communication with the spectator. It enables the painter to suggest possible interpretations, to situate his painting or to make statements about himself and his art. In other words, it allows him to say what cannot be painted or to play on two contrasting messages.

The privileged locus of the interplay between art and language is the title of a painting (2). The title provokes the viewer to make connections between elements that seem unrelated, or to focus on details to which he may have paid no attention, and thus to see the painting in a different light. To mention but one example from the Paintings List, discussed above on pp. 101-103, had it not been for the title, the spectator may well not notice the leg in the water in Breughel's "Icarus".

Linguistic assistance, so to speak, may also take the form of the inscription of words and sentences in the iconography of the painting. Written text, especially when the painting is centuries old, provokes the viewer's surprise and fascination: surprise because, through language, the painter apostrophizes his viewer; fascination because, as

in prehistoric wall-drawings, someone has left a message, the trace of which has reached contemporary man. Like all conversational interaction, these fragmentary messages may be a phatic statement intended to inscribe the artist in his work, or informative, that is to say intended as clues for the reading of the painting.

The dialogue that Van Eyck establishes with the viewer through the inscription "Johannes van Eyck fuit hic" (Fig. 25) is of the phatic kind. The "hic" has given rise to numerous conflicting interpretations (3). For some, Van Eyck may have been depicting his own wedding, an explanation that has not met with the approval of many art historians. For others, the "hic" refers to the Arnolfinis' wedding. The statement implies that one of the two people whose image is reflected in the mirror may be the painter himself, visually and verbally inscribed in the work. Another interpretation regards it as a comment on the power of art to cross class-boundaries. At the time, in fact, artists were considered as skilled workers and rarely mingled with high society. Being invited to the wedding of a successful businessman thus deserved to be recorded for posterity. The "hic", in this case, designates not only the Arnolfinis' household but also the canvas itself, the artist's representation of the scene. The inscription of the author is a cunning way of asserting his art: not just "Van Eyck me fecit" or "Van Eyck me pinxit" but "Van Eyck's art was allowed to enter the Arnolfini's house".

Carpaccio in "Saint Ursula" uses the inscription on the pillow-case to suggest a different interpretation of the painting (see p. 101 above). Holbein uses language to set the "Ambassadors" in historical context: Dinteville's and Georges de Selve's age is inscribed on the case of the dagger for the former and on the edge of the Bible for the latter ("Aetatis suae...", Fig. 31-32); the Schöner globe (Fig. 33) bears the names of towns which were of some importance to Jean de Dinteville - Drap d'Or, Auxerre, Polisy - alongside the names mentioned on the original globe, as if Holbein had turned himself into a mapmaker as well in order to re-create Dinteville's familiar space:

"Décrire l'espace: le nommer, le tracer, comme ces faiseurs de portulans qui saturaient les côtes de noms de ports, de noms de caps, de noms de criques, jusqu'à ce que la terre finisse par ne plus être séparée de la mer que par un ruban continu de texte."

(Eses, 21)

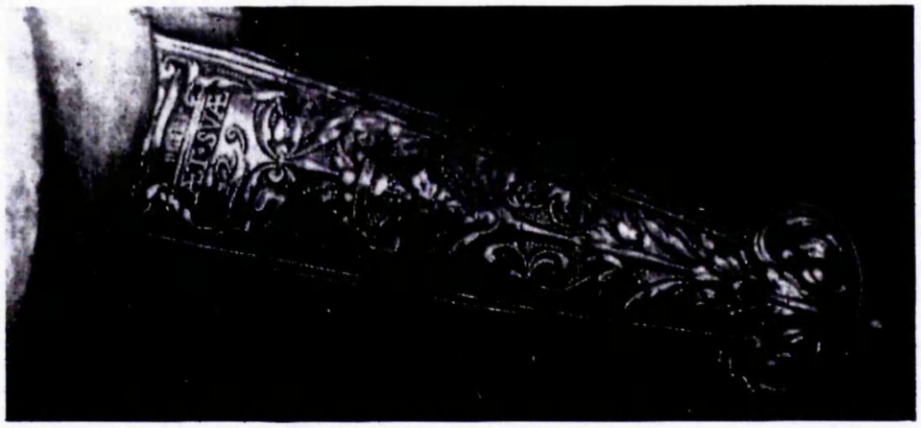


Fig. 31. Hans Holbein, "The Ambassadors" (detail).

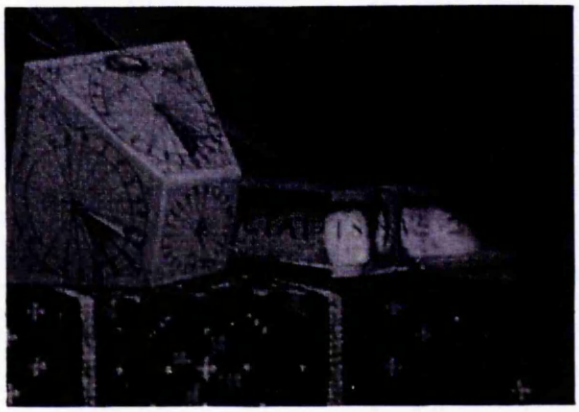


Fig. 32. Hans Holbein, "The Ambassadors" (detail).

Fig. 33. Hans Holbein, "The Ambassadors" (detail).

Moreover, the introduction into the pictorial space of two books reproduced in minute detail acts at the same time as icon and as symbol. Beside Georges de Selve Holbein places Luther's choral song (Fig. 34), published at Wittenberg in 1524, as a reminder of the Reformation ideas of the time and to signify the Bishop's open mindedness; beside Dinteville he places Peter Apian's The Merchant Arithmetic Book (Fig. 35) published in Ingolstadt (1527), near Augsburg, Holbein's native town and that of rich merchants like the famous Fugger* family. The book was the bible of businessmen in the Hansa towns and in the London steelyard; German was the language spoken in this milieu and it becomes, with the insertion of this book, the means of communication between the two ambassadors (4).

The examples of such use of writing in painting could be multiplied but, in the context of this argument, what shall be retained is that the insertion of writing operates a shift in the mode of representation, from iconic to symbolic, and allows the artist to inscribe himself in his work and to transform the meaning of his painting.

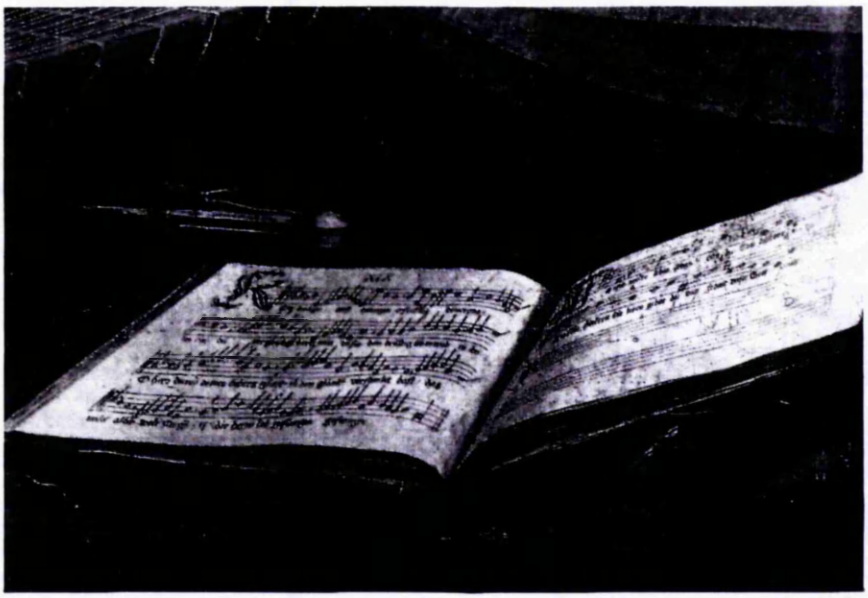


Fig. 34. Hans Holbein,
"The Ambassadors" (detail).

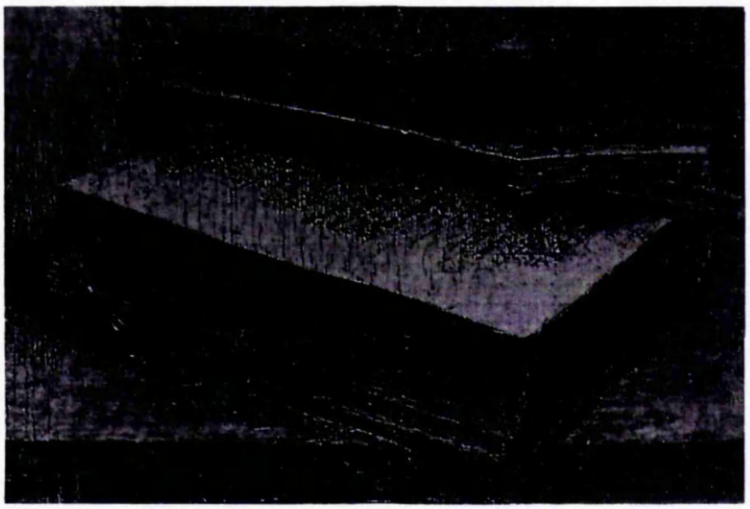
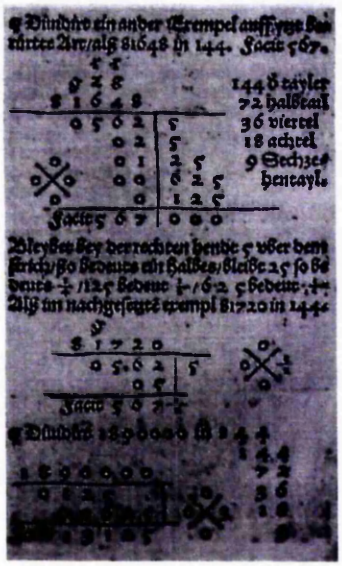


Fig. 35.
Hans Holbein,
"The
Ambassadors"
(detail)



Ekphrastic representation

The term "ekphrasis" comes from the Greek "ekphra zein" which signifies "to speak out" or "to tell in full". The principal meaning of the term, then, is description, although recently it has come to mean, in particular, the description of works of art (Chaffee 1984, 311-312).

The description of paintings in literature has a long history which originates in the 18th and 19th centuries, when distinguished writers like Diderot and Baudelaire were asked to review art works exhibited in the "Salons". These descriptions took the

form of a promenade, following the order of the exhibition - the entrance-hall, the "salon d'honneur", the East wing, the West wing, etc. - with lengthier accounts of those paintings which aroused the reviewer's particular attention. They were often emphatic texts using the "reading" of a painting as a pretext for reflections on life and art. The following passage on Hubert Robert's "Grande Galerie éclairée du fond" , taken from Diderot's "Salon" of 1767, best illustrates this tendency:

> "Les idées que les ruines réveillent en moi sont grandes. Tout s'anéantit, tout périt, tout passe. Il n'y a que le monde qui reste. Il n'y a que le temps qui dure. Qu'il est vieux ce monde! [...] De quelque part que je jette les yeux, les objets qui m'entourent m'annoncent une fin et me résignent à celle qui m'attend. Qu'est-ce que mon existence éphémère, en comparaison de celle de ce rocher qui s'affaisse, de ce vallon qui se creuse, de cette forêt qui chancelle, de ces masses suspendues au-dessus de ma tête et qui s'ébranlent ? Je vois le marbre des tombeaux tomber en poussière, et je ne veux pas mourir! et j'envie un faible tissu de fibres et de chair à une loi générale qui s'exécute sur le bronze! Un torrent entraîne les nations les unes sur les autres au fond d'un abîme commun; moi, moi seul, je prétends m'arrêter sur le bord et fendre le flot qui coule à mes côtés!"
>
> (Diderot 1767, 338-39)

Diderot's reviews are never neutral accounts of what is represented on the canvas. He interprets the scenes, explains the context, adds dialogues, links different episodes. Even if he does make incidental remarks on colours and pictorial effects, his commentaries are above all literary exercises which transform the painter's static representation into dynamic narrative (5). The description of Greuze's "Le Mauvais Fils puni" (Fig. 36-37), shown at the 1765 salon, may serve to reinforce this point. It comes just after an account of Greuze's "Le fils ingrat" in which the son is about to join the army despite the fact that his father is dying.

> "Il a fait la campagne. Il revient; et dans quel moment? Au moment où son père vient d'expirer. Tout a bien changé dans la maison. C'était la demeure de

l'indigence. C'est celle de la douleur et de la misère. Le lit est mauvais et sans matelas. Le vieillard mort est étendu sur ce lit. [...] La fille aînée, assise dans le vieux confessionnal de cuir, a le corps renversé en arrière, dans l'attitude du désespoir [...]. Un de ses petits enfants, effrayé, s'est caché le visage dans son sein. L'autre, les bras en l'air et les doigts écartés, semble concevoir les premières idées de la mort. [...]. La pauvre mère est debout, vers la porte, le dos contre le mur, désolée, et ses genoux se dérobant sous elle. Voilà le spectacle qui attend le fils ingrat. Il s'avance. Le voilà sur le pas de la porte. Il a perdu la jambe dont il a repoussé sa mère; et il est perclus du bras dont il a menacé son père. Il entre. C'est sa mère qui le reçoit. Elle se tait; mais ses bras tendus vers le cadavre lui disent: 'Tiens, vois, regarde; voilà l'état où tu l'as mis.' [...] Quelle leçon pour les pères et pour les enfants!"

(Diderot 1765, 147-48)

Fig. 36. Jean- Baptiste Greuze, "Le Fils ingrat" (1765) Paris, Musée du Louvre.

Fig. 37. Jean-Baptiste Greuze, "Le Fils puni"(1765) Paris, Musée du Louvre.

Ekphrastic representation in fiction mimics this kind of art criticism: titles, terminology, hesitations in providing an interpretation (introduced by markers like "semble", "paraît", "comme si", etc.), comments on the use of colours and on pictorial effects, all belong to the convention of art reviews.

Like all descriptive elements, the presence of paintings needs to be justified by its narrative context. The ekphrastic pause is logical, if not necessary, when a real or fictional painter figures in the story (Zola's L'Oeuvre, Balzac's Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu); or when a character visits art galleries (Zola's L'Assommoir; Stendhal's descriptions of Italian cities, etc.); or, again, when it is part of a description of a room. However, the function of these descriptions is less to embellish the story with decorative elements than to provide an iconographical backing to the message that the author intended to convey.

First of all they give a certain psychological depth to the characters and elevate them to a more significant aesthetic plane. Proust's frequent comparisons of people and places to works of art endow the character with universal values (Beauty, Virtue, Vice and so on) and allow the writer to make implicit statements about their appearance or a facet of their personality. In Du côté de chez Swann Marcel finds Odette unattractive until he sees her as Botticelli's Zipporah; then, once he realises that she is not the picture of virtue he imagined, the aesthetic referent changes to Gustave Moreau's less idealised women. Odette is thus transfigured through art, while the reader is given an insight into Marcel's romantic attitude.

Secondly, the painting may function as a leit motiv, structuring the poignant moments of the novel. Vermeer's "View of Delft" has precisely this role in Proust's A la Recherche du temps perdu. In La Prisonnière, it marks the stages of Marcel and Albertine's unhappy relationship. Gradually Marcel replaces love with writing, a transition that is, once again, marked by Marcel's essay on Vermeer's masterpiece (6).

The insertion of paintings (and artists) may also serve the purpose of metatextuality, to make statements about art and writing. This aspect is clearly visible in those novels which feature the figure of the artist. Whether the artists depicted are

modelled on existing figures (for example Cézanne and Manet in Zola, or Delacroix in Balzac), or emanate solely from the author's imagination, they often epitomize the act of creation. The fictional painter is often a tortured creature, so engrossed in his art that he is unable to lead a normal life; his ambition is to produce the masterpiece of a century, but he is only ever half a genius in that he can only attain perfection in sketches (Claude Lantier in L'Oeuvre) or in a detail (Frenhofer's sublime foot in Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu). Then, in a kind of demiurgical madness, he paints his canvas (and himself) to destruction. Like Hutting's "hazy" paintings, the yield of his hard labour is hardly visible, hidden under too many layers of colour. In the end, the romantic painter is a figure of failure, illustrating the painter's failure and the power of art to kill the artist (both Frenhofer and Claude Lantier commit suicide, and Bergotte dies overwhelmed by Vermeer's masterpiece).

It would not be right to view these artists simply as substitutes of the author. However, implicit in the aesthetic theory attached to the character of the painter is the occasional glimpse of the author's own aesthetic principles. In Claude Lantier's obsession with "plein air" painting, we find echos of Zola's naturalism, just as in Frenhofer's delirious search for the "living" portrait we can see some aspects of Balzac's realism.

Perec's approach to painting comes close, in principle if not in practice, to some of the aspects mentioned above, but presents also more specifically painterly features.

The role of painting in Vme

Like the written inscriptions to be found in some of the paintings on Perec's list, one of the functions of paintings in literature is to shift the level of representation. Holbein and Van Eyck used language to establish a dialogue with the reader ("I am talking to you"); Perec uses painting for the same purpose, only this time he appeals to the reader's visual imagination ("I am showing you something"). This does not make the written paintings less symbolic since, as Peirce tells us, all words and sentences are symbols, but, at the same time, they acquire, through the visual solicitation, iconic qualities.

Another kind of shift in representational level may be identified in the transition between reality and illusion or, rather, between a first and a second degree of illusion. The presence of all these paintings allows Perec to introduce, in a novel set in 1975, characters and events from the past, different places, a variety of costumes, poses, occupations, etc. The painting provides thus a relatively easy way of inserting those elements of the cahier des charges that would otherwise be out of place in a room/chapter (Magné 1985a, 241, mentioned on p. 149 above).

More generally, they affect the spatial and temporal dimensions of the novel. Through painting, the maximum time span of Vme is deployed, the earliest time reference going back to the prehistoric period (Cormon, "Chasse à l'auroch"), its latest coming up to the time of narration; similarly, the space of the novel encompasses, through painting, much more than the four walls of the the apartment-block.

Paintings, like Alice's mirror, are openings which lead into a paradoxical space wherein everything becomes possible, a good example of which is given by the Epinal woodcut in Bartlebooth's bookcase (Magné 1989a, 211):

> "une version peu scrupuleuse de *La Dépêche d'Ems* où l'artiste, rassemblant dans un même décor, au mépris de toute vraisemblance, les principaux protagonistes de l'affaire, montre Bismarck, ses molosses couchés à ses pieds, tailladant à coups de ciseaux le message que lui a remis le conseiller Abeken, cependant qu'à l'autre bout de la pièce l'Empereur Guillaume Ier, un sourire insolent aux lèvres, signifie à l'Ambassadeur Benedetti, lequel baisse la tête sous l'affront, que l'audience qu'il lui a accordée vient de prendre fin."
>
> (Vme, 598)

According to Philippe Hamon's theory of description (1972) this is one of the roles played by the window (Magné 1985a, 236, mentioned on p.149 above). Description presupposes a pause in narration where an informed character describes or explains the setting or another character, through a transparent medium, usually literally or metaphorically a "window" in the text. Perec's literal windows rarely have this

function in Vme, since the narrative conceit of the novel, the removal of the façade, presupposes their absence. The canvas is then the medium that more nearly espouses Hamon's definition, although it does not necessarily explain an aspect of the character's personality (the connection between the painting hung in one room and its occupiers is often not very clear). They are all small fragments of the real or of the imaginary which, added together, give a general view of the novel. In this sense art works can be considered part of the broader idea of incorporation, discussed in Chapter 1.

Whereas Holbein and Van Eyck used written inscriptions to introduce fragments of reality, Perec uses paintings to incorporate, inter alia, fragments of fiction. Very often the description of a painting points out, through its form, that it is a second degree representation (introduced by markers like "représente", "évoque", "imite", etc.). Many paintings, however, are "real" second degree representations since they are (modified) quotations from other authors or allusions to books and paintings (Magné 1985a, 241). The source text may provide the artist's name and/or the title of the painting, and the description attached to it (or part of it). It may also provide ready-made paintings : "deux grands paysages sombres d'un peintre alsacien du XVIIe siècle, avec des traces de villes et d'incendies dans le lointain" (Vme, 200) are in a glass-cabinet in Samuel Léonard's living-room in Butor's Passage de Milan (p. 60). It is interesting to note in this respect that verbal and visual quotations sometimes coincide, so that it is difficult to know which one Perec privileged over the other. The description of the drawing by Thorwaldsson (Vme, 175) is a quotation from Jules Verne, Un billet de loterie (p. 57), but it also corresponds to a drawing by G. Roux which illustrates the scene of the wedding in Verne's book (Fig. 67). Likewise, it is possible to attach a visual image to many of the quotations taken from Jules Verne and from Michel Butor (see respectively Fig. 56, 65, 80, 84 and Holbein in Appendix 1).

Sometimes it is a description of the setting or character in the source text that is isolated and framed as if it were a painting. On some occasions the allusion to forgery is deliberately omitted: the description of the two landscapes quoted above is followed by the mention of a "faux granit"; the canvas representing the judge in Madame

Moreau's apartement (Vme, 422) is a modified allusion to Kafka's The Trial which continues :

> "- Je le connais, dit Leni [...] Le portrait date de sa jeunesse, mais il ne peut en aucun cas lui avoir ressemblé car il est minuscule. [...] Il est juge d'instruction.
> [...]
> - Encore une fois rien que juge d'instruction, dit K. déçu, les hauts fonctionnaires se cachent. Mais il est tout de même assis sur un trône.
> - Tout ça c'est de l'invention pure, dit Léni, [...] en réalité il est assis sur une chaise de cuisine recouverte d'une couverture de cheval repliée."
>
> (Kafka 1925, 137-39)

On other occasions Perec gives away his forgeries in humorous translingual allusions: the two paintings on page 409 are quotations from Nabokov's Lolita (pp. 16 and 44); the artists' names - Hoaxville and Trapp - clearly indicate to the English-speaking reader that there is a "trap" somewhere (7).

Moreover, virtual paintings may become actual images: Rosanette's portrait in L'Education sentimentale (pp. 180-181), never completed by Pellerin, is to be found in Madame Marcia's Back Room ("La Vénitienne", Vme, 140). The transition from virtual to actual is made through language, that is to say, in this case, Perec modifies the tense of the description from the conditional to the present indicative. Significantly the source artist shares the author's approach to text production:

> "[Pellerin] passa en revue dans sa mémoire tous les portraits de maîtres qu'il connaissait, et se décida finalement pour un Titien, lequel serait rehaussé d'ornements à la Véronèse."
>
> (Flaubert 1869, 180)

Similarly paintings may be restored. The comparison between the painting of the judge in Kafka's The Trial and the one in Madame Moreau's apartment reveals an intervention of a linguistic kind on Perec's part:

> "Il représentait un homme en robe de juge, assis sur un trône surélevé dont *les dorures se détachaient en de nombreux points de la toile.*"
>
> (Kafka 1925, 137)

> "une grande toile sombre montrant un homme en robe de juge, assis sur un trône élevé dont *la dorure éclaboussait tout le tableau.*"
>
> (Vme, 422)

Finally, quotations and allusions may be used intertextually to identify a painting or a scene represented on paper. The Quattrocento portrait on page 306 is easily recognisable because it is mentioned in UHQD (and elsewhere in Perec's oeuvre), from which Grégoire Simpson's story is taken; the photograph on page 534 is reminiscent of Degas's "The Dance lesson"; "La lettre volée" (p. 512) echoes Vermeer's "The Lacemaker" (although it is also an allusion to Edgar Allan Poe's short story and to Perec's D): both Degas and Vermeer are mentioned in the sections of UCDA that correspond to these chapters (respectively on pp. 78 and 105 and on pp. 77 and 118).

A similar transition from reality to illusion (or, again, from first to second degree illusion) is operated through the incorporation of real paintings and the subsequent blurring of the distinction between real and false.

A number of real paintings figure in Vme either as comparisons with paintings and other images (Bosch's "L'Escamoteur" (Fig. 54) provides the pose and the composition of the engraving in Béatrice Breidel's room, p. 39; Dubout (p. 458), Greuze (p. 558, Fig. 89), Gillot (p. 515) and many others work in the same manner), or as originals for more or less modified copies by fictional painters (Hutting's "hazy" reproductions, Chapter XI, Fig. 58-64) or by obscure minor artists (Joseph Ducreux, p.573). Untitled canvases by real artists and existing art works are also inserted in Vme. In this case the paintings assume the double function of visual aid, helping to visualize the image, and of authenticators, since other paintings acquire, by virtue of "contagion", a semblance of existence (8).

The detection of false and fictional paintings is thus rendered almost impossibly difficult, all the more so since Perec not only treats real and imaginary art works with equal precision but also describes real paintings as if they were fictional and, conversely, false paintings as if they were real.

The sheer number of copies and reproductions placed in people's apartments or made by the many fictional artists who figure in Vme causes the reader to suspect the authenticity of some of the other paintings that purport to be "real". Perec's insertion of false paintings comes close to the use of forgery in art. For centuries, art historians have been confronted with the problem of attribution in that paintings attributed to great masters were in fact made by minor artists of the same period or even by modern forgers.

Similarly, some of the paintings in Vme are existing paintings but attributed to someone else: the "Descente de croix" in Bartlebooth's living-room (Vme, 516), attributed to a certain Groziano is in fact a real painting by Titian (Fig. 81) (Tiziano in Italian: the tranfiguration is based on the word game Tiziano = Titien = p'tit chien = Gros chien = Groziano) (9); the novel's index sometimes gives clues for the solution of the mystery: the entry for "Descente de croix" gives Titian's surname - Vecellio. (10)

Another variety of the business of faking is when the forger, like Gaspard Winckler in Le Condottiere, draws from a number of works from the same artist and produces a painting that could pass off as a painting by that artist. Vme is full of "forged" paintings by existing artists who painted similar subjects but not quite the painting mentioned in Vme: Fernand Cormon is famous for his illustrations of prehistoric scenes ("La famille pré-historique") but as far as it is known never painted a "Chasse à l'auroch"; Le Bas has reproduced most of Chardin's paintings but probably not those mentioned on page 516 (Fig. 83-84); Joseph Ducreux's engraving "Le Joeur éploré ou le desespoir" (Fig. 92) may correspond to Beppo's story (Vme, 573) but does not have the same pose, and so forth.

Sometimes paintings are "potential" in their subject. The reproduction of Pisanello giving four medals to Lionello d'Este (p. 152) is a possible subject since

Pisanello painted the effigy of Lionello d'Este on many medals. Such a painting, though, remains to be found (11).

The interplay between real and false engages the reader in a game whose object is less to distinguish between real and false than to re-create in one's mind, from existing and recognisable works of art, a picture of the fictitious canvases.

Finally paintings may not only be forged but also covered by a veil of fiction, somewhat like those forgers who painted over old panels to retain the texture of the wood. The description of Troyan's room in Chapter XLV is in fact a modified description of Van Gogh's "The Artist's Room in Arles" (Fig. 71):

> "Dans sa mansarde il y avait effectivement un radiateur, et aussi un lit, une manière de grabat couvert d'une cotonnade à fleurs complètement décolorée, une chaise paillée, et un meuble de toilette dont le broc, la cuvette et le verre étaient dépareillés et ébréchés".
>
> (Vme, 257)

The allusion is preceeded by the clue for its decipherment: Troyan had a second-hand book-shop in Rue Lepic, probably a few doors away from Theo Van Gogh's house (n° 54, Rue Lepic). Ironically, the quotation from Freud which follows this description is also a flagrant signal that should alert the reader. "On est prié de fermer les yeux" and "on est prié de fermer un oeil", set out on the page in bold capitals, should no doubt be read as an invitation to open one's eyes. In this case the insertion of the painting is of the anamorphic kind, since it can only be seen from a certain angle and has the same effect on the reader since, once seen, it becomes so obvious that one wonders how one failed to see it in the first place.

Another case in which paintings help the transition from one representational plane to another is when they introduce a narrative section, that is to say when they work in a way that is opposite to Hamon's "windows": not a pause in narration to introduce a description but a pause in description to introduce a story (Magné 1985a, 236, mentioned on p. 149 above). Some paintings are inspired by or illustrate a story ("L'Assassinat des poissons rouges", 283-84, "Un Rat derrière la tenture", 33-35, etc.) or

they refer to oral and written traditions (Robinson Crusoe, 512, the three musketeers, 215, La Fontaine's fables, 256, the song "Papa les p'tits bateaux", 256, etc.). In this case the image or the story undergoes not just one shift in the mode of representation (from the pictorial image to the verbal account) but a double shift that brings it back to its source - not just a verbal description of a painting but a verbal description of a painting that is itself a pictorial representation of an oral legend. The best example of this kind of multiple transition is Winckler's favourite painting first described in Chapter I as a painting. Then we learn, fifty-two chapters later, that it is a retouched photograph of a play, Ambitions perdues, which is in itself, possibly, a mediocre imitation of Bernstein's play. In transitional terms it is a verbal description of a visual representation of a written story, copied from Bernstein in the novel - and from Kafka's The Trial in textual "reality".

As in painting, the visual image and the narrative content of an ekphrastic fragment may be implicit in the title or in the brief description of the scene represented. Michel Butor, in Les Mots dans la peinture (pp. 12-22), argued that, in painting, titles influence our perception because they point out details that may have gone unnoticed and force the viewer to make the connection between the written and the painted image (see p. 150 above). Some of Perec's titles play the same role, as it is up to the reader to extrapolate an image from the text. Some depend on the reader's cultural imagination - everybody has, for example, an image of Rastignac at the Père Lachaise cemetery (Vme, 406). In fact the engraving is found in a bag from Weston's shoe-shop. This detail transforms the pictorial reference into a "moral" judgement, since the reader of LC is familiar with the significance of Westons in Perec's vision of consumerist society. Thus the painting assumes a different meaning according to the reader's knowledge of Perec's books. Some paintings require a Perecquian reader, as they also figure in Perec's previous works: "A Day at the Races" (Vme, 140) reminds the reader of LC where in the "ideal" house is hung an engraving of "Thunderbird, vainqueur à Epsom" (LC, 9); even more so, since the title of the painting comes just after "L'Ambition" and an allusion to Flaubert (Pellerin) (12). The associations in the reader's mind are

coloured by his own visual and literary culture.

Elsewhere, on the contrary, titles seem completely incoherent: the description of the engraving hung at Béatrice Breidel's (Vme, 39) does not seem to justify the title "Qui boit en mangeant sa soupe/Quand il est mort n'y voit goutte". Here the title introduces an element of mystery, which may only become coherent, if ever, if seen from a certain angle.

Paintings may have a narrative function without bringing about a transition in the mode of narration when they are treated as objects. The narrative potential attached to them is that they have themselves a story (Bartlebooth's watercolour or some of Hutting's portraits) or that they are elements of a story (e.g. the paintings stolen by the Danglars, 493, those inherited by Hélène Brodin, 108-109).

Although paintings provide the ideal framework into which to insert elements from the cahier des charges, or else play an active role in fiction production and metadiegesis, it should now be clear that almost every painting in Vme has its own specific genesis and its own mode of functioning. In this respect and in many others, Georges Perec's practice seems based on an extraordinary, self-conscious and largely successful bid to defeat all attempts at generalisation - or to spike the guns of theoretical, categorical, deconstructive and all other reductive readings to which he knew his work would be subjected.

Artists

As we have seen, one of the roles of paintings in Vme is to act intertextually as pointers to Perec's other works. Furthermore, whereas the figure of the fictional writer is almost absent from Perec's oeuvre (with two exceptions: "Un Voyage d'hiver" and 53J), many of his characters have a creative side; artists, in particular, are often portrayed. The question arises: why, out of all the vocations that Perec's characters could have, do so many of them turn out to be artists? A number of answers may be suggested. However, the rediscovery of Le Condottiere has made it possible to have a clearer picture of the artist's role in his fictional works. In this early novel, Gaspard

Winckler dwells upon the inevitability of a projection of the artist in his work and on the process of artistic creation. This consideration provides an angle from which the image of the artist may be viewed in Perec's subsequent works.

The character of the artist in Romantic fiction has been seen as a mise en abyme of the author's writing. But whereas the Romantic artist explicitly discourses upon art and the process of artistic creation, Perec's artists are more discreet. The inscription of the author is thus better elicited in relation to some of Perec's painterly sources.

Three of the artists of Vme's Paintings List are encrypted in their paintings in a deceptive way : Van Eyck and Velasquez use a mirror to confuse the viewer; Van Eyck's inscription and Holbein's anamorphosis work in a similar fashion (see pp. 95-97 above).

The inscription of the author in Vme works on two levels. At a first level, explicit references to Perec's life and to his practice of writing may be found in one or another of his fictional artists, although the same is true for many of his other characters. At a second level, the fictional artist's use of a particular technique and his approach to the question of artistic creation bears a substantial similarity to the author's writing. However, unlike Romantic novelists, Perec's statement on his writing does not take the form of long disquisitions on the artist's part. On the contrary, it may be compared to Holbein, Van Eyck or Velasquez for it requires a competent reader who can read not only at surface level but also obliquely, taking on board the different forms of artistic expression. A survey of fictional artists in Vme will serve to clarify this point.

Franz Hutting is the only artist in Vme who has attained a certain notoriety. He began his career with mineral art sculptures which represented prehistoric animals (Ch. IX). Then came the "haze period" (Ch. XI), when he made copies of well-known paintings and painted them over with a thick haze which almost completely covered the original copy. In the final stages of his career he paints "imaginary portraits" constructed around a complicated system of linguistic and mathematical constraints of

an Oulipian nature. In fact, the titles given to these portraits (p. 354) are a homage to Oulipian practices as each title hides the names of members of the Oulipo (Atlas, 394-395):

1. Tham Douli portant les authentiques *tracteurs métalliques* rencontre trois personnes déplacées	Oulipo
2. Coppélia enseigne à Noé l'art nautique	Noel Arnaud
3. Septime Sévère apprend. que les négociations avec le Bey n'aboutiront que s'il lui donne sa soeur Septimia Octavilla	Benabou

(Vme, 352)

The last part of Hutting's career is reminiscent of the author's use of constraints, although the resemblance verges on caricature in that his "creative" traits are exaggerated and too easily deciphered. Moreover Hutting is the only artist who, like Lester Nowak in UCDA, heralds a beginning of aesthetic theory. Here, again, the reader is presented with a caricature of both this kind of "art-speak" and of authorial mise en abyme:

> "Tout tableau, explique Hutting, et surtout tout portrait,
> se situe au confluent d'un rêve et d'une réalité."
> (Vme, 354)

This is the sort of all-purpose statement that is applicable to any number of works of art or of literature. As a reference to Perec's own literary enterprise (La Boutique obscure is the most obvious example of this mixture of fiction and reality, but is typical of Perec's oeuvre as a whole) it is too clearly signposted, too simplified. Self-reference of this nature, like Nowak's statements in UCDA, should not be taken literally.

Another aspect of Hutting's artistic personality provides a rather more subtle echo of Perec's own writing. The reproduction of well-known paintings, during his "haze period", together with the various references to the process of copying in the painter's immediate surroundings (the twelve year-old boy who pretended to write

metaphysical poems but was only reciting those that his mother copied out of books; the "emulator" of Christo who participated in his Tuesday gatherings, etc.) brings to the fore the notions of citational art and obfuscation. One of Hutting's most famous paintings from this period is a copy of Ingres's "The Turkish Bath":

> "un des plus cotés *brouillards* de Hutting, celui dont l'oeuvre de départ ne fut rien moins que *Le Bain turc*, pourvu par le traitement que le Hutting lui a fait subir d'une surabondance de vapeur. De loin, l'oeuvre ressemble curieusement à une aquarelle de Turner, *Harbour near Tintagel*, qu'à plusieurs reprises, à l'époque où il lui donnait des leçons, Valène montra à Bartlebooth comme l'exemple le plus accompli de ce qu'on peut faire en aquarelle, et dont l'Anglais alla faire sur place, en Cornouailles, une exacte copie."
>
> (Vme, 64-65)

The "curious" thing about it is that Ingres's painting is a portrait of a group of women in a Turkish bath which, despite its title, does not present any hazy effects. To make it resemble one of Turner's steamy seascapes is indeed an achievement. All the more so since Turner's watercolour seems to be another example of Perec's "forged" painting: the English artist in fact painted many coastal scenes, especially of Cornwall, including a "Tintagel castle", but probably not a "Harbour near Tintagel" (13). In this sense the painting may be regarded, more than his "imaginary portraits", as being "at the confluence of a dream and of reality" and may be compared to Perec's use of quotations and to his strategy of covering his tracks to make the inscription unnoticeable. (This track-covering may also be seen in texts that are not, strictly speaking, citational works; in Wse, for example, Perec deliberately distorts and falsifies facts in order to cover more important details; see Bellos 1990, 107-118).

Marguerite Winckler is, again, associated with copying:

> "Elle peignait rarement des sujets originaux: elle préférait reproduire ou s'inspirer de documents existant déjà".
> (Vme, 309)

Like Hutting, Marguerite's copying is closely connected with writing since she does not simply reproduce but she modifies the source image: Winckler's favourite painting (p. 22 and p. 308) is in fact a photograph that has been coloured and touched up by Marguerite; "La dernière Expédition à la Recherche de Franklin", was made by combining a series of engravings published in Le Journal des Voyages, Vme, 309-10) (14).

Miniature, as a genre, is by definition associated with writing as it is the descendant of the illustrations and decorations that accompanied medieval manuscripts - from "minium", which was the red lead used to write the first letters of paragraphs (Heath 1905, 4).

Another consideration that likens miniature to writing, and notably Perec's writing, is that the re-creation of an image in microscopic form is an expression of the maker's craft and the quality of his observation. Marguerite's ability to reproduce a whole picture in a 3x4cm frame is, in itself, a creative exercise, which requires remarkable manual skill. The fascination that most people feel for miniatures is, above all, admiration for the artist who has managed to paint so much detail in such a confined space; a similar fascination is experienced by the reader of Vme, which if it could hardly be described as a miniature work, it is certainly a microcosm of life as well as a concise compendium of a vast range of artistic forms.

Furthermore, miniature questions the artist's ability to look at reality and the viewer's perception, discriminating between simply looking and the active process of watching. Miniature, like trompe l'oeil, points to the very action of looking:

> "Ainsi le trompe-l'oeil n'est qu'un piège qui nous renvoie à notre regard, à la manière dont nous regardons - et occupons - l'espace. [...] Ce qui arrête notre regard, un court instant, c'est l'irruption de la

> fiction dans un univers auquel, à cause de ce que l'on pourrait appeler notre cécité quotidienne, nous ne savons plus prêter attention."
>
> (L'Oeil ébloui, unpaged)

The minuscule corresponds to those habitual things that too often, in life and in literature, go unnoticed and that Perec systematically listed and described in texts like "Tentative de description des choses vues au carrefour Mabillon", "Tentatives d'épuisement d'un lieu parisien", and elsewhere throughout his oeuvre (15).

The Gaspard Winckler of Vme is not, strictly speaking, an artist, at least not in the conventional sense of the term, but Perec makes little distinction between craftsmen and artists just as he made little distinction between the writer's craft and his art. A member of the Oulipo (Workshop of Potential Literature), he often compared himself to a craftsman or to a "peasant cultivating different fields" and insisted on the "doing of fiction" (P/C, 9-10; BN 1977; JR 1979, 139; KM 1981). In Perec's universe the artist is he who, like Marguerite, can use his hands as well as his eyes. Gaspard Winckler, the narrator tells us, is remarkably good at both:

> "Il était prodigieusement adroit de ses mains, et jusqu'à sa mort il garda intacts une précision, une sûreté et un coup d'oeil tout à fait exceptionnels".
>
> (Vme, 51)

His "Devil's rings", his "witches' mirrors", the carved wooden chest illustrating in minute detail scenes from The Mysterious Island are all examples of his handicraft as well as of his "art of deception". For these pieces, as for puzzle-making, Winckler plays on expectation and deception. In order to outwit his enemy, he builds the expectation that when two pieces of puzzle have the same "blue fringe" left by the glue along the edges they may well fit into each other (16). Then, once Bartlebooth has come to rely on this clue, he changes strategy:

> "C'est seulement quand cette habitude fut prise, et suffisamment ancrée pour que s'en débarrasser devînt

> désagréable, que Bartlebooth se rendit compte que ces 'heureux hasards' pouvaient parfaitement être piégés à leur tour, et que le faiseur de puzzles n'avait laissé, sur une centaine de jeux, cette mince trace servir d'indice - ou plutôt d'appât - que pour mieux l'égarer ensuite."
> (Vme, 417)

Similarly it was thirty years before Valène could "really see" Winckler's carved chest. Valène's surprise is, once again, the result of deceived expectations:

> "ce qui l'étonna, avant même qu'il en prenne clairement conscience, c'est qu'il s'attendait à voir des têtes de cerfs, des guirlandes, des feuillages ou des angelots joufflus, alors qu'il était en train de découvrir des petits personnages, la mer, l'horizon et l'île tout entière".
> (Vme, 48)

A younger version of Gaspard Winckler was, in Le Condottiere, the "king of forgers"; the Gaspard Winckler of Vme does not follow in his little brother's footsteps, but becomes the king of deception.

Perec's "art of deception" may be seen in all his writings, from crosswords to his lipogrammatic novel, D; from fictional works to autobiographical texts (17). It is a vast enterprise which seems to have begun almost with his decision to be a writer and that, in itself, could be the subject of many theses. In this context, the examples will be limited mainly to Vme. In Perec's novel, deception starts with the falsification of information of the kind already mentioned in the course of this chapter (copies, forgeries, inscriptions, allusions, quotations and so on) and in Wse, with the constant mystification of details (Bellos 1990, 110-118). Although modern literature has taught the reader that alongside traditional genres there are also fictional (auto)-biographies and autobiographical novels, one remains inwardly convinced that a novel is fiction, autobiography is true, even if memories can be one-sided, that essays deal with historical evidence and so forth. Perec's mixing of the genres whereby a novel like Vme presents many autobiographical details while his autobiography (Wse)

continuously and deliberately distorts information, does not conform to the reader's expectations. Moreover, the information is falsified in such a way that it takes the reader some time before even questioning its veracity, never mind seeing where the deformation occurs. This is the case, for example, for the "almost-real" paintings mentioned above, or for the description of Valène's painting which will be discussed later.

Another way in which Perec constructs a system based on expectation and deception is when he inserts in a text resonances that point to his other works. Sometimes it is in fact possible to put side by side two passages, or the use of a particular word or expression across Perec's oeuvre and a whole network of meaning is created. The reader is thus encouraged to look for "connections" but every so often he may find that he can apply this rule successfully and, at the same time, miss other, more subtle, meanings simply because he fell into the trap of the imposed expectation. The different pronunciations of "Cinoc" (Vme, 360) have been seen as a reference to the modifications undergone by Perec's own name (Wse, 52). David Bellos has shown that the source of this word game is also, and probably more significantly, a punning revenge on the pet name of a friend with whom the author quarrelled (Bellos, GPLW, p. 182).

The unpainted painting

Two of Vme's fictional artists are more complex and even closer to the author's creative process: Serge Valène and Percival Bartlebooth.

As a painter, Valène has many points in common with the author. The only art pieces by Valène explicitly mentioned in Vme are illustrations of books (p. 90), a pencil drawing of a jack of clubs (p. 221), a pen and ink portrait of the Grifalconis (Ch. XXVII), and the projected painting of 11, rue Simon-Crubellier. Valène can then be considered to be more a draughtsman than a painter. According to the Swiss art historian Heinrich Wölfflin, who introduced the distinction between malerisch (painterly) and

linear art (drawing), painting uses colour and tone to suggest form whereas the vehicle of drawing is the line itself (Wölfflin 1932, 18-53). In this sense Valène's draughtsmanship may be compared to the act of writing. Even in a literal sense the "line" denotes both the mark made by the artist's pencil and the written line of the page.

Valène's projected painting is the only painting to be described in such detail despite the fact that it is non-existent. It sums up, both thematically and structurally, the similarities between Perec's approach to portrait, landscape and still life and that of the artists of the cahier des charges (discussed in Chapter 3). The painting is, like Heinrich Kürz's in UCDA, a mise en abyme of the novel. It is itself intended to be constructed in mise en abyme, a further indication of Valène's role of authorial substitute:

> "Il serait debout à côté de son tableau presque achevé, et il serait précisément en train de se peindre lui-même, esquissant du bout de son pinceau la silhouette minuscule d'un peintre en longue blouse grise avec une écharpe violette, sa palette à la main, en train de peindre la figurine infime d'un peintre en train de peindre, encore une fois une de ces images en abyme qu'il aurait voulu continuer à l'infini comme si le pouvoir de ses yeux et de sa main ne connaissait plus de limites."
>
> (Vme, 291)

Like Perec's (and like Renaissance artists'), his composition is based on a grid:

> "Une grande toile carrée de plus de deux mètres de côté était posée à côté de la fenêtre, réduisant de moitié l'espace étroit de la chambre de bonne où il avait passé la plus grande partie de sa vie. La toile était pratiquement vierge: quelque traits au fusain, soigneusement tracés, la divisaient en carrés réguliers, esquisse d'un plan en coupe d'un immeuble qu'aucune figure, désormais, ne viendrait habiter."
>
> (Vme, 602)

His painting, described in detail in Chapter LI, combines the artist's concern for story-telling and a more visual approach. In fact, the list of one-line portraits in Chapter LI consists of narrative units, expressed in the present participle, (e.g.: n° 34: "Le stayer défiguré se mariant avec la soeur de son pacemaker") and of static descriptions of characters in a fixed pose (e.g.: n° 23: "L'homme de peine du Paraguay s'apprêtant à brûler une lettre"). Sometimes there is a shift in emphasis since the sentence that summarizes the character or the chapter does not necessarily refer to the main point (e.g. n° 59: "La jeune Japonaise tenant à bout de bras la torche olympique" is a postcard found in Chapter VIII, which deals with Gaspard Winckler).

Other similarities may be seen in the treatment of objects. Valène's list of objects on page 291-292 indicates an attention to detail similar to that of Van Eyck or Antonello da Messina as well as to Perec's own "consideration for small things". In this list objects are associated to a character, acting thus as "qualifying objects" (see above, p. 115-17). Furthermore, they are sometimes quoted from real life and literature (the Réol's bed, p. 292), a common feature of Holbein's and Perec's treatment of objects.

The inscription of Valène in his projected painting functions, like the author's, on two levels: at the first level, the artist is explicitly present in his work ("Il serait lui-même dans son tableau", p. 290-291). At a deeper level he is encrypted in a more deceptive fashion. The Great Acrostic (pp. 292-298) spells out the word "âme", which could be seen both as the core of the book (and of the painting) and as a self-allusion to the fictional as well as to the real author of this verbal painting (it has been translated as "Ich" in German and "ego" in English). The painting may also be seen, in Lukács's terms, as the meeting point between the world of essence (the Soul) and the world of appearance, in other words the formal point at which the communion between the artist and the Other can take place (see p.40 above).

Finally, the use of pseudo-false information in the description of the painting that precedes the Great Acrostic may be compared to Holbein's anamorphic skull and to Perec's idea of the necessity of falsification in the process of artistic creation. The list

of objects and of their owners is slightly displaced since some objects exist (in the novel, that is) but belong to somebody else; others are slightly modified; others still are absent altogether. For example a spice box is attributed to Madame Marcia's cook while it is Madame Moreau, not Madame Marcia, who has a cook; the Altamont's precious tapestry depicting the amorous old folks represent in fact the three wise men (p. 533); it is Elzbieta Orlowska who went to Tunisia, not Béatrice Breidel and neither brought back Tunisian babouches to Mademoiselle Crespi; what is more Elzbieta Orlowska does not have a lectern. On other occasions the list, like the index, adds information: Jane Sutton's raincoat (p. 61), for instance, becomes a mackintosh.

Here the reader not only has to be familiar with Vme to remember the objects and their owners but also the displacement of information is so obvious that it becomes invisible, almost as if Perec, like the character of Poe's The Purloined Letter, had hidden it in the only place that is so obvious nobody thinks of looking there. Perec conceals the truth by not concealing it, a stratagem used by Bérengère, in Rev, to hide the "key" to her jewels:

> "- Est-ce qelqe strétégèmme de Bérengère ?
> - Certes, mets je le décèle ézément: Te rémembères
> les 'Lettres Menqentes': le meyer recette de céler est
> de sembler lesser en éveedence!"
>
> (Rev, 138)

It takes a careful reader like Andrée Chauvin (1990) to notice such details.

It also questions the workings of the memory: the reader's memory, Valène's, who started the painting only to "fix" in his memory the apartment-block in which he lived almost all his life, and memory in general which is often fragmentary, incomplete and notoriously tricky.

Even more striking is the affinity of Serge Valène's project with Perec's approach to autobiography. In an interview given in 1979, Perec distinguishes between a collective memory (Jms), a personal memory (Wse) and a "fictional memory", that is to say a past that is not his own but could well have been (REI) (FV 1979, Jsn, 81-86).

Serge Valène represents the apartment-block's collective memory - he had lived in the building longer than anyone else - so that the narration, focalised on his character, is often interrupted by expressions like "il se souvenait".

His project of a painting that would be a "monument" (Vme, 168) to the building and its inhabitants, a "souvenir ultime", as Perec writes in the preparatory notes to the novel (FP, 61), is an expression of what Perec calls his "phobia of forgetting" (FV 1979, Jsn, 87); the exhaustive descriptions of the "ordinary" is one of the results of this phobia and may be seen, in Vme, in the lists of objects and details attached to the character of Valène (see pp. 117 and 130-31 above). Perec's original idea was to make Valène a naïve painter (preparatory notes, FP, 61,1,18 and 62,1,11), then he abandoned this idea, perhaps because as a naïve (and therefore untrained) artist he could not have played the role of Bartlebooth's art teacher. Yet the genre would have suited Perec's aim as naïve art is considered, after Stendhal, to be "the sublime of the ordinary" (Petit Larousse de la peinture).

Apart from the various autobiographical elements attributed to his character (mentioned in Chapter 3 above), Valène is associated with Perec's own memory of childhood and with his own learning process. In fact, the name is a deformation of his grandmother's name (GS 1983, 79-80) and Perec used it in 1959 as a pseudonym for one of the first reviews he published ("L'enfance de Djilas au Montenegro", a trace of which is to be found in Valène's trip to Montenegro, p. 313). Moreover, in Vme, Bartlebooth's project may be seen as a metaphor of life: learning (childhood); living (adulthood) and memory (old age). In this sense, Valène is associated not only with Perec's childhood but also with Bartlebooth's artistic childhood (Molteni 1993, 127). Like Perec who in Wse tries to retrieve his memory of childhood through the meticulous description of photographs, objects and details, Valène is continuously exercising his memory with lists of things he can remember, those he has forgotten or does not want to forget, only this time it is not a single memory he is trying to recover, but life itself.

The third type of autobiographical work mentioned by Perec - the fictional

memory - is, once again, embodied in Valène's painting. Although the tense in which the painting is described is not always the same (present: Chapter VII; future: Chapters III, XII, XIX, XXVII; conditional: Chapter LI, etc.), the main description, in Chapter LI, is in the conditional. This indicates a wish, a project, a potential idea and is therefore appropriate to describe a "fictional" painting, that is to say a painting which is made by the hero of the novel and which is, like Perec's memory of Ellis Island, something that could have been but was not.

The fact that Valène is found, at the end of the novel, in front of an almost blank canvas has been seen as an example of a work that undoes itself (Magné 1985a, 238-239) and as a failure of art to reconstruct the past: only writing is capable of such reconstruction. Perec often mentioned and staged works that undo themselves (Bartlebooth's project, 53J, "Coscinoscera Tigrata", etc.). However, in Valène's case there is only one reference to the existence of the painting (Chapter VII). The reversal of the situation in the Epilogue is, like the ending of UCDA the ultimate deception: the author and the narrator have fooled the reader into thinking that these works existed:

> "Des vérifications entreprises avec diligence ne tardèrent pas à démontrer qu'en effet la plupart des tableaux de la collection Raffke étaient faux, comme sont faux la plupart des détails de récit fictif, conçu pour le seul plaisir, et le seul frisson, du faire-semblant."
>
> (UCDA, 120)

On the other hand, if it does denote a failure on Valène's part, it is part of a general statement on the futility of life, like many others in Vme, in which not many of the characters succeed. Valène, though, is not like Zola's Claude Lantier or Balzac's Frenhofer, the frustrated failure, since his main preoccupation throughout the novel is not to find the means of expression that will allow him to put his idea into practice, but to remember everything. His painting is a fictional one, a construction of the mind. In this sense it comes closer to Ellis Island, an autobiography that "could have been". Memory, like dreams, is made up of images (see above, p. 138). Valène's quest for images did not result in a painted canvas but only in a figure in the mind's eye.

That Ephemeral Thing

Percival Bartlebooth is a particular sort of artist. Even if his life-project is, in itself, a work of art, painting for him is only the means that allows him to carry out what he set out to do, not an end in itself. Despite his initial lack of natural talent, he achieves, after ten years of daily lessons, the competence he needs to paint his five hundred seascapes. The account of his learning process has been seen as an allusion to the process of writing (Magné 1985a, 239):

> "La première année, Valène commença donc par lui apprendre à dessiner et lui fit exécuter au *fusain*, à la *mine de plomb*, à la *sanguine*, des copies de modèles avec *châssis quadrillé*, des croquis de mise en place, des études hachurées avec rehauts de craie, des dessins ombrés, des exercices de perspective. Ensuite il lui fit faire des lavis à l'encre de Chine ou à la sépia, lui imposant de fastidieux travaux pratiques de *calligraphie* et lui montrant comment diluer plus ou moins ses coups de pinceau pour poser des valeurs de tons différents et obtenir des dégradés."
>
> (Vme, 154)
>
> (Magné's italics)

Although the tools used for painting may indeed point to the act of writing, the question here is not so much whether or not Perec's account is intended to be a metaphor for his own writing, but whether it belongs to the broader issue of painting and writing as two similar activities.

The second stage in future artists' learning process is mastering the technique of drawing (the first being learning how to look). In effect, drawing is at the origin of all writing systems. In primitive societies, when the language system as we know it was yet to be invented, the vehicle for the communication of ideas was drawing. Similarly, in our civilisation, children learn how to draw long before they can read and write (Goupil 1950, 6-7).

Valène's lessons reproduce, in literary form, the instructions given in the watercolour manuals that Perec consulted as a backing for the novel's central theme

(just as he consulted oil-painting manuals for Le Condottiere). Materials to be used outdoors and indoors, the way of preparing brushes and paper, some of Valène's comments, down to the frequency of his lessons, correspond to the norms prescribed by these manuals (18).

Bearing these considerations in mind, the choice of watercolour painting and of the subject retains its pertinence to Perec's novel and to his writing.

The sea has compelled the Western imagination since the 18th century because it epitomizes travel, adventure, romance, in other words it appeals to the artist's and to the receiver's fantasy. In art, watercolour is the medium that is immediatly associated with seascapes, thanks to the work of artists like Constable, Turner and Ruskin, just as, in architecture this technique brings to mind the pale colouring of plans and cross-sections. The choice pertains, then, both to Bartlebooth's travels, and to a novel whose underlying design is constructed almost as an architectural plan.

More particularly it is also best suited to the English millionaire who uses it. Indeed it is invariably described as a gentlemanly (or, even worst, "womanly") hobby: the paint being water-based, the artist is less likely to suffer from strong odours and sticky substances; it does not necessitate heavy and cumbersome baggage, nor undignified accoutrements.

By the same token the very nature of watercolour seascape painting reflects some of the aspects of Vme and of Perec's style. One of the properties of watercolour is transparency. Bartlebooth is thus associated with transparency, just as Winckler's art of deception is associated with opacity and obfuscation - his role, like that of his predecessor in Le Condottiere, is to "falsify" the image, to break it up into significant units. Throughout the novel, the watercolour-puzzle metaphor plays on visibility (watercolour, transparency, reconstruction) and non-visibility (fragmentation, the layering of glues and varnishes, and, of course, the "layering" of memory), transparency and opacity, lightness and darkness. On a couple of occasions Bartlebooth almost fails to find the missing piece because he was looking for a darker-coloured piece:

> "Bartlebooth s'apercevait que la pièce adéquate n'était pas noire mais grise plutôt claire - discontinuité de couleur qui aurait dû être prévisible si Bartlebooth ne s'était laissé pour ainsi dire emporter par son élan [...] découvrir que l'espèce d'Afrique à reflets jaunes qu'il tripotait sans savoir où la placer occupait exactement l'espace qu'il croyait devoir remplir avec une sorte de trèfle à quatre feuilles aux tons mauves éteints qu'il cherchait partout sans le trouver."
>
> (Vme, 415)

In this sense Bartlebooth's project is not simply another self-annihilating work, like many others in Perec's oeuvre. The blank sheet of paper undergoes different stages of layering before reverting to its original state, a layering in which each stage undoes the previous one and whose supreme architect is Gaspard Winckler. It is the idea of life as a work of art, in Flaubert's sense:

> "C'est la phrase de Groucho Marx: partir de rien pour arriver à pas grand chose. C'est le schéma idéal, partir de rien pour arriver nulle part; mais entre temps une vie entière s'est déroulée, la vie conçue comme une oeuvre d'art, et l'oeuvre d'art conçue comme un néant, comme le disait Flaubert. C'est aussi l'histoire du livre."
>
> (JB 1978, 37)

Secondly, the successful representation of seascapes often depends on the sky and the water, two unpredictable entities which can change very suddenly. The artist is therefore subject to a time constraint that can be best met by a medium which, for practical reasons, dictates rapidity of execution: watercolour is worked on damp paper so that the time of execution is limited to however long it takes for the paper to dry. This is why manuals recommend that the artist uses sketching to familiarize himself with the scene before putting brush to paper. A watercolour student should practice the eye and the hand to acquaint himself with the important elements of his composition so that he can paint relatively quickly. Bartlebooth has obviously learnt the lesson:

> "Barlebooth consacrait deux semaines à chaque port, voyage compris, ce qui lui laissait généralement cinq à six jours sur place. Les deux premiers jours, il se promenait au bord de la mer, regardait les bateaux, bavardait avec les pêcheurs pour autant qu'ils parlassent une des cinq langues qu'il pratiquait [...] et parfois partait en mer avec eux. Le troisième jour, il choisissait son emplacement et dessinait quelques brouillons qu'il déchirait aussitôt. L'avant-dernier jour, il peignait sa marine, généralement vers la fin de la matinée, à moins qu'il ne cherchât ou n'attendît quelque effet spécial, lever ou coucher de soleil, menace d'orage, grand vent, petite pluie, marée haute ou basse, passage d'oiseaux, sortie des barques, arrivée d'un navire, femmes lavant du linge, etc. Il peignait extrêmement vite et ne recommençait jamais."
>
> (Vme, 82)

A further important element in the successful execution of watercolours is the exercise of the memory. In effect the artist must cultivate his visual memory so that he is able to recall the effect of the atmosphere he intended to capture in paint even when the scene is no longer the same. Again Bartlebooth is well versed in such tricks of the trade only in this instance the lesson has served to hinder rather than help his grand design. The overall memory of the scene which the merest of indications serves to revive impedes the process of assembling the pieces of jigsaw puzzles whose successful execution depends on one's ability to see pieces in isolation, and detached from the overall image:

> "Il en avait soigneusement détruit les brouillons et les esquisses et n'avait évidemment pris ni photos ni notes, mais avant de les peindre il avait regardé ces paysages de bord de mer avec une attention suffisamment intense pour que vingt ans plus tard il lui suffise de lire sur les petites notes que Gaspard Winckler collait à l'intérieur de la boîte 'Ile de Skye, Ecosse, mars 1936' ou 'Hammamet, Tunisie, février 1938' pour que s'impose aussitôt le souvenir [...]".
>
> (Vme, 416)

The rapidity of the medium makes watercolour the ideal technique for capturing the beauty of the ephemeral. Philippe Huismann goes as far as to say:

> "En l'aquarelle seule s'incarne l'instant, un élan, un sourire, une feuille qui tombe. Cette technique a toute la fragilité du temps. Rien ne peut être tout à fait prémédité: les couleurs se transforment de la brosse au papier, coulent et parfois se mêlent copieusement".
>
> (Huisman 1968, 7)

This aspect of watercolour echoes Perec's novel wherein the rendering of "life" takes the form of a collection of so-called "insignificant" moments and details which make up "that ephemeral thing" which is life (Mathews 1988, 37).

Watercolour is also the medium of chance. Depending on how much water there is on the paper or on the brush, the weather, and all sorts of unpredictable elements the brush may produce effects that were never intended by the artist. Like the set of cards in Baugin's "Nature morte" it adds an element of chance in a rigorously structured and organised project, which is both Bartlebooth's plan and Perec's novel. Moreover, unlike oil-painting, where it is possible to cover, amend and add details, in watercolour it is virtually impossible to correct what is done. "You cannot correct a sky", kept repeating Valène in a draft version of Chapter 26 (FP, 111,85,1,2r°), parroting Adrian Hill, without knowing that it will be precisely because Bartlebooth will try to correct a sky, to replace part of the cloudy crepuscular sky with a memory (the W-shaped piece of puzzle) that he will fail to finish his project.

Significantly in the section entitled "You cannot correct a sky", Adrian Hill writes:

> "As the evening lengthens and the deepening effect (if the day has been cloudy) becomes charged with dramatic content, the struggle to record an accurate impression (for that is all one can hope for) is fraught with tantalising problems. Indeed it becomes a veritable battle of wits, with the declining light weighing the scale heavily against your chances of success".
>
> (Hill 1945, 42)

Hill's "battle of wits" reminds the reader of Vme of Bartlebooth's struggle against time and against Winckler, a battle in which chance plays as important a role as wit. The passage quoted above could almost be a description of Bartlebooth's death, towards eight o'clock in the evening, as well as of the novel itself.

In addition, Perec's style lies at the intersection between rapidity and slowness, transparency and opacity, rigour and chance. In fact, despite the length of the novel, the many short stories that interrupt the description of the building are masterpieces in conciseness and effectiveness, of the kind Italo Calvino ought to have included in his "Memo for the next millenium" devoted to rapidity (19). Some images suggest in a few words a whole scene, as for example Marguerite's response to Valène's declaration of love (p. 313). One only realises how concise it really was when, wishing to find the passage again, it escapes diagonal reading precisely because where one was looking for whole paragraphs, if not whole pages, the passage consists of only one or two lines:

> "C'est au cours de cet inoubliable voyage qu'un soir, en face des murailles crénelées de Rovigno, Valène avoua à la jeune femme qu'il l'aimait, n'obtenant en réponse qu'un ineffable sourire."
>
> (Vme, 313)

Moreover, Perec's art of deception is based, like Winckler's, on obfuscation while his books can be read, with equal pleasure, at a first degree level.

All but one of Bartlebooth's watercolours are not described as paintings. Sometimes only the place and the date of execution are given, and often this fragmentary information corresponds to fragments of Perec's own life, allowing the inscription of the author in his work: "Fort-Dauphin, Madagascar, 12 juin 1940" and "Ile de Skye, Ecosse, mars 1936" are imperfect mementos of, respectively, his father's death, the 16th June 1940 (Wse, 53) and of Perec 's birth day, 7 March 1936 (Perec also visited Scotland in 1964: see P/C 1979, 33); "Hammamet, Tunisia, février 1938" (p. 416) to the place visited by Perec in 1961 and described in LC (p. 129-31) .

On other occasions fragments of the paintings are described as Bartlebooth

reassembles the puzzles:

> "il lui suffise de lire sur les petites notes que Gaspard Winckler collait à l'intérieur de la boîte 'Ile de Skye, Ecosse mars 1936' ou 'Hammamet, Tunisie, février 1938' pour que s'impose aussitôt le souvenir d'un marin en chandail jaune vif avec un tam o'shanter sur la tête, ou la tache rouge et or d'une femme berbère lavant de la laine au bord de la mer, ou un nuage lointain sur une colline, léger comme un oiseau".
> (Vme, 416) (20)

Colours and especially the imperceptible variations of the colours are often part, if not all, of the description, precisely because puzzle-soving often relies on colours. Like shapes, though, colours can be deceptive.

The only painting that is fully described is Bartlebooth's last puzzle (pp.596-597), despite the fact that, like Valène's unpainted painting, its existence is implausible. Bartlebooth may well have produced such a painting but not on location since the port depicted is a combination of mythology and falsified reality. Meander is both a mythical and a real river, now called Menderes, in South-West Turkey, flowing South-West, then West to the Aegean. Maiandros, as Menderes was known to the ancients, was one of the sons of Thetis, the only one who refused to go back to the sea, that is to say who refused death, hence his many circumvolutions to delay for as long as possible the moment when he would have to accept his destiny. The Meander, or Menderes, which flows West and North-West to the strait of the Dardanelles was known in antiquity as Scamander or Xanthos (from the name of Achilles's immortal horse, who reminded him of his imminent death before being struck dumb by the Furies, the snake-haired godesses of vengeance). Whether Bartlebooth painted the port near Troy, where Xanthos flowed to the Dardanelles or he painted the port where Maiandros flowed to the Aegean, the subject points to death and failure. It provides yet another interpretation of Bartlebooth's failure to fit a W-shaped piece of puzzle into an X-shaped gap (W, the upside down M of Maiandros, the refusal of death, failing to replace the X of Xanthos, asserting its inevitability) (21).

The description opens with veiled allusions to death (the aridity of the landscape, the darkness of colours, the inextricable tangle of vertical and diagonal lines recalling the meanders of Thetis's son). Then follows a passage from Italo Calvino's Dall'Opaco ("des vignes, des pépinières...", Dall'Opaco, 307) which provides the only touch of colour in the painting. In the source text this is the sight the author sees when, looking back at his past, he sees not the path that he has taken but all the paths he could have taken. In short he sees his "potential" past. The second part of the description, which includes a quotation from Proust's Le Temps retrouvé (p. 651), is an oneiric landscape, with allusions, again, to labyrinths, ending with violence and death:

> "Un ciel violent, crépusculaire, traversé de nuages rouge sombre, surplombe ce paysage immobile et écrasé d'où toute vie semble avoir été bannie."
>
> (Vme, 597)

This is the only case in which the description of a painting reproduces the mood and the themes of the scene represented in the novel, in a way that comes closer to Vermeer's "View of Delft" in La Prisonnière. It is almost as if, years in advance, Bartlebooth had depicted his own death. Unlike Calvino, the landscape Bartlebooth sees leaves no alternative. Given the system of constraints he could have done nothing but fail his 439th puzzle, an outcome which ironically "could have been foreseen long ago".

In the end, the painter characters of Vme reproduce, in more or less devious ways, the themes, the style and the structure of the novel. Similarly, in the technique used by these artists and their attitude towards artistic expression may be seen Perec's own strategy of writing. Ironically, it is only when one looks at painting as painting rather than as verbal description that Perec's statement about writing becomes clearer.

Changing the meaning

Paintings act, on the whole, as openings to the imaginary and as "metaphors" of the act of writing. Taken individually, though, they do not usually explain a character or add a different meaning to the scene, except perhaps when the character is an artist.

Some paintings work intertextually and meaning may be stimulated by the juxtaposition of the two texts. Winckler's favourite painting, first described in Chapter I is a quotation from Kafka's The Trial describing the last scene just before K. is taken away by the two executioners and killed "like a dog". The book ends:

> "De ses yeux qui s'obscurcissaient K vit encore, tout près de son visage, joue contre joue, les deux messieurs observer l'issue: 'comme un chien!' dit-il; c'était comme si la honte devait lui survivre."
>
> (Kafka 1925, 256)

The shame comes from K.'s sense of guilt which, in The Trial, is what ultimately kills the hero. In Vme, K is waiting for somebody and the two men are, so we are told in Chapter LIII, witnesses for a duel. The chapter ends:

> "Gaspard Winckler est mort, mais la longue vengeance qu'il a si patiemment, si minutieusement ourdie, n'a pas encore fini de s'assouvir."
>
> (Vme, 22)

Like K.'s shame, there is something that survives Winckler's death, only this time the situation is reversed - not shame, but revenge, almost as if Winckler had come to wreak vengeance over the two executioners.

The painting acquires a different meaning if the reader is familiar with Perec's self-identification with Kafka and with his long-planned but never written radio play entitled Wie ein Hund, "like a dog" (see Bellos, GPLW, 388-89 and 472-73). In a letter to Johann-Maria Kamps (26 March 1871) Perec explains the project in the following terms:

> "Le point de départ de Wie ein Hund est à la fois extrêmement simple et extrêmement ambitieux: c'est un effort pour pénétrer à l'intérieur même du langage de Kafka, et, en repérant certaines constantes et certaines contraintes, de retracer le cheminement d'une idée (c'est-à-dire d'un ensemble de mots) à l'intérieur de la tête de l'auteur. Ce n'est pas exactement un travail de critique, même si la critique contemporaine agit souvent ainsi, mais, c'est très précisément, une tentative d'appropriation ".
>
> (Letter to Kamps, quoted in Bellos, GPLW, 471)

The fact that the painting is mentioned or described three times in the novel gives it predominance over the others. Yet it is not clear that it would play such an important role if the "Kafka connection" were removed.

It may be possible to interpret at least some of the paintings in Vme in a similar fashion. Indeed, meaning often arises from the intertextual relationship between the painting described and its literary or pictorial source. Broadly speaking, though, trying to extrapolate meaning from titles and descriptions of paintings is a rather speculative exercise that does not necessarily add to the understanding of the novel. On the other hand the presence of all these paintings adds meaning to the novel. Painting therefore should not be considered in isolation but, as jigsaw puzzles and Gestalt Theory, they should be considered as a whole.

> "L'objet visé [...] n'est pas une somme d'éléments qu'il faudrait d'abord isoler et analyser mais un ensemble, c'est-à-dire une forme, une structure: l'élément ne préexiste pas à l'ensemble, il n'est ni plus immédiat ni plus ancien, ce ne sont pas les éléments qui déterminent l'ensemble, mais l'ensemble qui détermine les éléments: la connaissance du tout et de ses lois, de l'ensemble et de sa structure, ne saurait être déduite de la connaissance séparée des parties qui la composent".
>
> (Vme, 15)

Chapter 5
Painterly techniques as correlates for textual practices

a) Description and ekphrasis

In traditional novels, description acts as a pause in narration, as an "overture" introducing a new character, setting or theme, or simply as a visual aid for the reader. Philippe Hamon, who analysed the workings of description in literature (1972), identified some of the rules which govern the descriptive passage (mentioned on p. 159 above). According to Hamon's theory the descriptive pause requires (a) an informed and talkative character (b) the appropriate scene (pause, walk, etc.) (c) a transparent medium (window) and (d) a psychological motive (distraction, curiosity, memory, etc.).

These principles either do not apply to Perec's descriptions or they are to be taken, as Perec took them, literally and to the extreme. In Vme there are indeed an informed character (Valène, the oldest inhabitant of the building), a pause in the "action" (Bartlebooth's death), a transparent medium (the façade taken off) and a motive (Valène's painting). Yet the situation is reversed as the whole novel is a pause in the narration, describing the apartment-block.

Michal Mrozowicki in "La description dans La Vie mode d'emploi" (1988), rightly argues that the building of rue Simon-Crubellier is described throughout the novel while single paragraphs deal with particular rooms, sentences depict objects and people and it is only in attributive and appositional clauses that situations and qualities emerge. In principle, then Vme reverses the priority conventionally given to the dynamics of the story, substituting a static, and therefore intrinsically pictorial, overview. On the other hand the narration comes to interrupt the description by dint of exhaustivity: the description, to be complete, needs to include historical background. Description and narration are therefore two forces of the same system, neither of which is privileged over the other.

Moreover, if in Vme a new description, or rather a new part of the overall description, introduces characters and objects, the pertinence of these passages to the characters is not immediately obvious. In the preface to La Comédie Humaine Balzac writes:

> "La Société ne fait-elle pas de l'homme, suivant les milieux où son action se déploie, autant d'hommes différents qu'il y a des variétés en zoologie ?"
> (Balzac 1842, 8)

Balzac's oeuvre is riddled with such descriptions of the "habitat", just as in Zola's , the Goncourts' and by and large in all naturalist writing, the environment is regarded with an almost greater consideration than the characters themselves. By contrast, Perec's descriptions of setting do not necessarily throw light on a character's personality. Sometimes the surroundings including, as we have seen, the paintings hung on the wall, seem to bear no relationship to its occupiers. Roland Barthes, in "L'Effet de réel" (1968, 85), argues that irrelevant descriptions add an "effect of reality" since one of the properties of highly civilised language systems is to include, also, the useless. Studies on the bees' language system, Barthes explains, showed communicatory devices which served a particular purpose (assembling food, for example); there is no evidence of an equivalent of description, that is something other than the precise communication of what is necessary to survival. Perec's descriptions are not always irrelevant; bee-like passages may also be found throughout the novel, purporting to give an aspect of the character's life or personality. Often, though, the relevance needs to be extrapolated by the reader or to be reconstructed from the fragmentary information supplied.

Whatever role paintings may play in the novel, ekphrasis is not substantially different from the description of character and setting. Paintings may simply be named (author and/or title), or mentioned, when a brief description is attached to them, or described, when more is said about the painting. They are often precisely situated in space (on the wall, on the right, above the side-board, etc.), although they may also be elements of a list, mentioned or described in some sort of order ("Il y a quatre tableaux

sur les murs. Le premier [...]", Vme, 140-41) or simply inserted in a non-ordered list (the Chinese print inserted in the list of objects carefully kept by Madame Albin, p. 273).

Colour, painterly effects, or the artist's technique are not altogether absent, but they are often limited to one-word labels ("hyper-réaliste", p. 372; "pseudo-naïf", p. 278, etc.), unless the painting or the artist's style is, as we have seen, compared to famous paintings. In this case, the description is implied in the comparison. Sporadic aesthetic judgements may also be found but, again, they take the form of very brief statements:

> "Forbes, dont c'est une oeuvre de jeunesse *encore mal dégagée de l'influence de Bonnat*, s'est inspiré *très librement* de ce fait divers."
> ("L'Assasinat des poissons rouges", Vme, 35)

or

> "on voit, *assez naïvement représenté*,Robinson Crusoé, bonnet pointu ,camisole en poil de chèvre, assis sur une pierre".
> ("Robinson cherchant à s'installer aussi commodément que possible dans son île solitaire", Vme, 512)

When, by contrast, the ekphrastic pause is given more importance, the description may be narrative, as we have seen, or a visual account of what can be seen on the canvas. In this case the description conforms to the general lines of Perecquian practice, discussed below, and is therefore very different from the tradition of this kind of description, wherein the writer does not simply relate the content of the painting but comments on and interprets the scene. Occasionally the ekphrastic passage assumes a more "literary" tone. Yet, even then, the description remains flatter than usual :

> "Le tableau lui-même représente une chambre. Sur l'appui de la fenêtre il y a un *bocal de poissons rouges et un pot de réséda. Par la fenêtre grande ouverte, on aperçoit un paysage champêtre: le ciel d'un bleu tendre, arrondi comme un dôme, s'appuie à l'horizon sur la dentelure des bois; au premier plan, sur le bord d'une route, une petite fille, nu-pieds dans la*

> *poussière, fait paître une vache. Plus loin, un peintre en blouse bleue travaille au pied d'un chêne avec sa boîte de couleurs sur les genoux.* Tout au fond miroite *un lac sur les rives duquel se dresse une ville brumeuse avec des maisons aux vérandas entassées les unes sur les autres et des rues hautes dont les parapets à balustres dominent l'eau."*
>
> (Vme, 283)

Here Perec uses the conventional rhetorical devices - the use of adjectives, metaphors ("arrondi comme un dôme") and so on. Needless to say the two passages which provide these devices are quotations (the first from Flaubert's Education Sentimentale, pp. 456, 359, 358, 355; the second from Calvino's Invisible Cities, p. 59). But the juxtaposition of two registers within the same description, far from being incongruous, balances the text. The "literary" quotations are flattened by the surrounding matter-of-fact description and, conversely, these are heightenend by the quotations. The result is still very different from, for example, the description of paintings in Zola's L'Oeuvre:

> "Et là-haut, là-haut, au milieu de ces voisinages blafards, la petite toile, trop rude, éclatait férocement, dans une grimace douleureuse de monstre. Ah! L''Enfant mort', le misérable petit cadavre, qui n'était plus, à cette distance, qu'une confusion de chairs, la carcasse échouée de quelque bête informe! Etait-ce un crâne, était-ce un ventre, cette tête phénoménale, enflée et blanchie? et ces pauvres mains tordues sur les linges, comme des pattes rétractées d'oiseau tué par le froid! et le lit lui-même, cette pâleur des draps, sous la pâleur des membres, tout ce blanc si triste, un évanouissement du ton, la fin dernière! Puis, on distinguait les yeux clairs et fixes, on reconnaissait une tête d'enfant, le cas de quelque maladie de la cervelle, d'une profonde et affreuse pitié".
>
> (Zola 1885-86, 293)

If paintings, then, have a specific strategic role in Perec's novel, ekphrasis is little different from description. Indeed one could even go so far as to say that even if all the paintings were taken out of Vme it would still remain a painterly novel. In fact,

the pictorial quality of Vme is intrinsically present in the text by dint of description and painterly techniques such as perspective and composition.

In order to begin to explain the functioning of description in Vme, one must first of all distinguish between different levels of description whose functioning is quite unrelated: the general description - that of the building, including the different portions of landings and basements - and the description of details.

At a general level Perec's descriptions make use of cinematographic and literary techniques as well as pictorial ones. But regardless of the choice of medium, these descriptions unquestionably reproduce the way in which the viewer perceives reality or an art work, be it a painting or a film. Generally speaking, whereas conventional description involves a sensorial response on the reader's part, through odours, tactile properties, associations and analogies, for Perec the human faculty that seems to be mostly affected is the sense of sight. Odour, touch, taste and hearing are much less developed.

It is again the movement of the eye that establishes the order in which the description is implemented. This movement may be from bottom to top, or vice versa (floors to walls/walls to floor); from right to left or from left to right in a circular fashion (the travelling shot); from a general impression (walls, floors, colour scheme, etc.) to a particular detail (the zoom effect). Another consideration that applies to these descriptions is that they partake in Perec's broader tendency to position things in space. In a paper on description that he gave at Albi (1981), Perec explains the importance of finding spatial referents, to place things in relation to each other:

> "Ce quartier ne me disait rien, parce que c'est un quartier où je ne savais absolument pas me repérer, l'endroit où je me trouvais ne signifiait rien pour moi. Par exemple, j'habite dans un quartier où si on me demande dans quel quartier tu habites, je dis - 'J'habite à côté de la Mosquée, ou j'habite à côté du Jardin des Plantes'. A un chauffeur de taxi je peux dire 'j'habite à côté de la Clinique Saint-Hilaire' [...]. J'ai tout un système de repères qui commencent à fonctionner à partir du moment où je sais où est la poste."
>
> (Albi, 329) (1)

Sometimes, on the contrary, the description consists of an appositional list of objects. Like descriptions, lists can be ordered and use devices like the travelling (Altamont's cellar, pp. 201-203). Indeed one of the uses of the list is exactly to arrange a set of items in an orderly classification (Roubaud 1990, 202), more often than not with a mnemonic intent (shopping lists, for example, reproduce the order in which items are displayed in the supermarket). However, Perec's lists arise also from a concern for exhaustivity. Speaking about Jules Verne (1957) Barthes says:

> "Verne a été un maniaque de la plénitude: [...] Son mouvement est exactement celui d'un encyclopédiste du XVIIIe siècle ou d'un peintre hollandais: le monde est fini, le monde est plein de matériaux numérables et contigus. L'artiste ne peut avoir d'autre tâche que de faire des catalogues, des inventaires, de pourchasser de petits coins vides".
>
> (Barthes 1957, 80)

This statement could be applied to Perec's writing where a number of lists serve the purpose of filling space to saturation. Again, the reader's eye is solicited, only in this case he is asked to perceive not so much single units but the general impression the author intended to convey (clutteredness, abundance, voyage, etc.). For some lists the faculty of hearing as well as that of sight is called upon as rhythm plays an important part. The list taken from a Manufrance catalogue, giving the details of the do-it-yourself equipment sold by Madame Moreau (pp. 102-106), is intentionally constructed "like a poem", each "stanza" ending with the refrain "Garantie totale 1 an" (JP 1978, 18, GS 1983, 76, OB 1981, 52).

Particular descriptions of people, objects and places present the same ordered or non-ordered structure but, despite the general impression, they are usually very short and limited to a few details: hair, eyes, size, clothes and pose for people; shape, dimensions, colour and function for objects and often just one image for places. Adjectives are scarce and often neutral (big, small, yellow, grey, etc); verbs are

constative and passive ("il y a", or "est occupé par", etc.); metaphors are not altogher absent but they are limited to a bare minimum (see Burgelin 1984, 141-142).

Such a descriptive practice makes the text flatter: the lack of information sometimes prevents the reader from really "seeing" what is portrayed, unless the character and his/her surroundings are sterotyped to easily recognisable images (the Louvets, Chapter XXXVII; the Plassaerts, Chapter LIV, etc.).

The received idea of "literary" texts, or "fine writing", on the contrary, is the type of description that relies on strongly connotative metaphors and other rhetorical figures. The resulting imagistic descriptions are often compared to painting. The two following passages, the first from Flaubert's Education Sentimentale the second from Vme illustrate the difference.

> "Un lustre de cuivre à quarante bougies éclairait la salle, dont les murailles disparaissaient sous des vieilles faïences accrochées; et cette lumière crue, tombant d'aplomb, rendait plus blanc encore, parmi les hors-d'oeuvre et les fruits, un gigantesque turbot occupant le milieu de la nappe, bordée par des assiettes pleines de potage à la bisque. Avec un froufrou d'étoffes, les femmes, tassant leurs jupes, leurs manches et leurs écharpes, s'assirent les unes près des autres ".
>
> (Flaubert 1869, 154)

> "Au centre, sous un lustre fait d'une vasque d'opaline suspendue par trois chaînes de laiton doré, une table, constituée par un fût de lave provenant de Pompéi, sur lequel est posée une plaque hexagonale de verre fumé, est couverte de petites soucoupes à décors chinois remplies de divers amuse-gueule: filets de poissons marinés, crevettes, olives, noix de cajou, sprats fumés, feuilles de vigne farcies, canapés garnis de saumon [...]".
>
> (Vme, 143)

The difference between the two descriptions is that in the first case almost every word is imbued with connotations and associations, adding a message or an interpretation to the scene and invoking the reader's reaction, whether it be one of

participation or rejection. Advertising and promotional texts work in the same manner, since the art of persuasion relies on subtle but strongly significant metaphors to convey the message. The second description is, in comparison, almost value-free, and simply states what is to be seen. If there is an "implied" meaning it has to be read between the lines, in words that are specific to Perec's writing, in the veiled allusion to the author's universe, rather than in the description taken at face value.

Perec uses many types of description, most of which are value-free, as can be seen from the following list:

Inventory of the types of description used in La Vie mode d'emploi
(Quotations and allusions are given in brackets)

Advertisement
p. 22: appt. for sale/rent; 121: theft of the Holy Vase; 170-171: future of the building; 216: travel agency inset (Roussel).

Advertising streamer
p. 305: Soldes, fin de séries, etc. (Butor).

Announcement (of death, etc.)
p. 152: Winckler's death; 304: samples of typographic settings (Butor).

Bibliography
p. 58: Hutting; 75-76: Rorschash.

Book
- Title page
  p. 137: musical score; 555: Analytical Bibliography on Hitler's death.
- Extract: see quotation
- Back cover: p. 99: "La Souricière" (all. to Hamlet).

Caption/Legend
As "subititle" to
- paintings:
  p. 39: "Qui boit en mangeant sa soupe..." (Rabelais); 352-4: Hutting's "imaginary portraits"; 398: Persian miniature; 457: "Por Larranaga 89cts".
- engravings:
  p. 320-22: Paris streetsellers (Proust); 501: La Culebute; 512: "Zerstörung das hübsche Schulmädchen".
  See also maps: 259, 408.

Catalogue entry
p. 103-6: Do-it-yourself equipment (Manufrance).

Diagram
p. 139: displacement of items from Mme Marcia's shop to her house.
(See also games: chess, cross-words).

Dictionary or reference entry
p. 43: Kusser (Robert II); 78: Dinteville's ancestors (Rabelais); 316: Egyptology dict. (Rabelais); 565: Mark Twain.

Dictionary entry: lexicon
p. 362 and 364-66: obsolete words (Bescherelle and TT).

Equation/Maths
p. 24: Beaumont (Roubaud); 85: Factorials.

Footnote
p. 345: cross-reference to Gratiolets' genealogical tree; 485-86: Polonius; 519: Marvel House geographical distribution; 586: Hutting.

Games
- Anagrams, p. 508-10
- Arithmetical puzzles, p. 508-10
- Card games *, p. 221
- Chess *, p. 410
- Crosswords *, p. 144
- Logic problems, p. 508-10
- Puzzles *, Preamble and p. 249-51
- Riddles, p. 29 and 508-10 (all. to Mathews, Holbein, Verne, Roubaud)
- Word-chain puzzles, p. 508-10

(* include graphic reproduction).

Genealogical Tree
p. 111: Gratiolet.

Graphic reproduction
- Typography
- Graphic

(see diagrams and games).

Index
pp. 607-675.

Inscription
p. 236: Koran; 501: Torah.

Instructions for use
p. 452: "Orabase".

Label
p. 82 and 254: on puzzle boxes; 244: "Gomme Hephas" (Joyce); 378: whisky; 534: V. Altamont's "Memoirs".

Letter
p. 149: Appenzzell (Leiris, Lowry); 160-1: P. Hebert-L. Grifalconi (Flaubert); Ch. XXXI: Salini, Sven Ericsson, E. Breidel.

Letter Head
p. 244: Anton/Tailor.(all. to Antonello da Messina).
See also announcements, 304.

List (vertical)
p. 231: food-calories; 240: interpretation of dreams; 256 and 487: blotters (487 includes quotations from Mathews and Proust); 292-298: Compendium; 320: expenses; 352-54: paintings; 360: pronunciations of "Cinoc"; 364-6: obsolete words; 400: Mme Marcia's collection of watches; 485: Instructions for Jane Sutton; 519: Marvel House; 542: barometer readings; 580: articles published by Lebran-Chastel.

Map *
p. 259: France and its colonies; 408: Mer Meditérranée; 475- 77: TE RA COI B I A.
* inscription only.

Menu
p. 350: "fin de siècle" (all. to Queneau); 553: red meal.

Motto
p. 241 (article by Verscharen); 468: "Non frustra vixi".

Newspaper
• Headline, 107 (Butor); 216 (Joyce)
• Excerpt 107, (Butor)
• Clipping, 285.

Notes
p. 430: Smautf (Stendhal).

Notice
p. 115: "Arrêt momentané de l'ascenseur".

Panel
p. 257: optician (Freud).

Plan
p. 603: 11, rue Simon-Crubellier.

Plaque
p. 404: CABINET DE CONSULT (Joyce).

Programme
p. 564: Cinema.

Quotation (in italic)
• extracts of a book: p. 24: mathematical formula (Roubaud); p. 33: La Tarande (Rabelais); 78: Dinteville's ancestor (Rabelais); 225: Coleridge; 316: Egyptology dict. (Rabelais); 343: Anatomy book (Roubaud); 533-4: facsimile pages of medieval text (Rabelais); 565: calembours.
• extracts of a play: "Assuérus", p . 552 (Rabelais).
• extracts of a letter: p. 122: description of the Holy Vase (See also Letter).
• Mottos and Maxims: p. 241 (article by Verscharen); 468: "Non frustra vixi".
• Songs and Hymns: p. 258: German hymn (Butor); 370: cabaret song; 463: pastourelle d'Adrien Villart.
• Children literature: p. 265: primers (Joyce), 335: nursery rhyme (Kafka).
• School texts: p. 267: essay title; 381: theatre (Racine and Corneille); 407:Latin prose.
• Spells: p. 387-88: Lorelei (Rabelais).

Recipe
p. 30: "Mousseline aux fraises"; 269-70: Salade Dinteville.

Scientific definition
p. 73: shells; 84: coral; 430 and 556: plants.

Shop sign
p. 268: "Casse-croute à toute heure"; 395: "C. Marcia Antiquités".

Table
p. 360: possible pronunciations of "Cinoc".

Table of content
p. 333: Bulletin de l' Institut de Linguistique de Louvain (includes quotation from Borges and Freud).

Visiting card
p. 303: joke shop (Butor) .

The predominant feature of all these types of description is that they often stand out typographically on the page and/or reproduce the object visually. Visually perceptible literature is precisely the sort of literature which employs typography and the space of the page in such a way as to make seeing and reading a single act. "On lit

avec les yeux" wrote Perec in an essay on the socio-physiology of reading (P/C, 112). The typographical setting acts both as a pause in the density of the written text and as a visual catalyst, making the reader see the object.

The combination of different registers (scientific, journalistic, epistolary, etc.) does not always aid visibility but, on the contrary, substitutes for the visible world, a different kind of discourse. When the reader is given the historical background of an object (Bartlebooth's coffee-jars; the Holy Vase etc.) or a character, its appearance does not matter since it has been replaced by its history.

Despite the numerous divergences, some of Perec's descriptions do come closer to the received idea of "fine writing". Valène's vision of the underworld (Chapter LXXIV) is one of the best examples of Perec's "literary descriptions" in Vme. The style is reminiscent of the agricultural dream in LC (Chapter X). The force of both passages lies in the use of adjectives with strong connotations, the use of rhetorical devices such as metaphors, personifications, ellipses and, above all, enumerations and hyperboles. In LC, the overall thrust of the text, in unison with the characters' mounting euphoria (the culmination of their upward mobility), is upwards, towards even loftier descriptive heights. Perec uses the same technique in Vme except that the momentum is reversed: the movement is not ascendent, but descending into the depths of the underworld. Similarly both passages are synesthetic, appealing to the five senses rather than primarily to the sense of sight. It is also interesting to note that one passage of Vme takes up some of the elements of the agricultural dream but, by changing some adjectives, the paradisiac vision turns into a nightmare:

> "Tout ce qui se mange et tout ce qui se boit leur était offert. C'étaient des caisses, des cageots, des couffins, des paniers, débordant de grosses pommes jaunes ou rouges, de poires oblongues, de raisins violets. C'étaient des étalages de mangues et de figues, de melons et de pastèques, de citrons, de grenades, de sacs d'amandes, de noix, de pistaches, des caissettes de raisin de Smyrne et de Corinthe, de bananes séchées, de fruits confits, de dattes sèches jaunes et translucides.
> Il y avait des charcuteries, temples aux milles colonnes aux plafonds surchargés de jambons et de saucisses,

> antres sombres où s'entassaient des montagnes de rillettes, des boudins lovés comme des cordages, des barils de choucroute, d'olives violacées, d'anchois au sel, de cocombres doux.
> Ou bien, de chaque côté d'une rue, une double haie de cochons de lait, de sangliers pendus par les pieds, de quartiers de boeuf, de lièvres, d'oies grasses, des chevreuils aux yeux vitreux.
> Ils traversaient des épiceries pleines d'odeurs délicieuses, des pâtisseries mirifiques où s'alignaient les tartes par centaines, des cuisines resplendissantes aux milles chaudrons de cuivre."
>
> (LC, 96)

> "et plus bas encore des systèmes d'écluses et des bassins, [...] des montagnes de cageots gonflés de fruits et de légumes, des colonnes de meules de gruyère et de port-salut, des enfilades de demi-bêtes aux yeux vitreux, pendues à des crocs de bouchers, des amoncellements de vases, de poteries et de fiasques clissées, des cargaisons de pastèques, des bidons d'huile d'olive, des tonneaux de saumure, et des boulangeries géantes avec des mitrons torse nu, en pantalon blanc, sortant des fours des plaques brûlantes garnies de milliers de pains aux raisins, et des cuisines démesurées avec des bassines grosses comme des machines à vapeur débitant par centaines des portions de ragoût graisseuses versées dans des grands plats rectangulaires".
>
> (Vme, 445)

The tense in which the two visions are described corresponds, in each case, to the general idea of the passage: in LC the tense remains the same (the imperfect) before and after the dream, as an indication, perhaps, of a way of being: their attempt to become rich through market research is little different from that sort of dream. In Vme the conditional, which is used sparingly throughout the novel and more often than not associated with Valène, points to the narrator's nightmarish fears and also introduces a ludic element. In fact, the conditional is the tense used in child role-play ("Moi, je serais le grand méchant loup..."). Hyperboles and enumerations of increasingly delirious sights also belong to an infantile imaginative process. And, like the childish imagination, it borders on the absurd but it is also extremely vivid.

The description of Valène's vision of the future destruction of the building (Ch. XXVIII) and some of the stories (Lorelei, Ch.LXV), work in the same fashion. By and large, though, this type of description is remarkable by virtue of its rarity in a novel whose style is characterized by flatness and precision.

b) Aenergia

The question of aenergia, pictorial vividness, is complicated by the fact that in all written texts the image in the reader's mind always depends on his own imaginative power. When a film is adapted from a book, very few people agree on the choice of actors or on the decor simply because the film director's interpretation is only one possible and personal image that may or may not correspond to that of other readers. In Vme the issue is more complex still since the length of the novel and the fragmentation of information requires visual memory as well as imagination.

On the other hand, aenergia is at its utmost on the two opposing ends of the descriptive scale: in minimal descriptions (cliched images, typographical settings, graphic reproductions of the object) and in maximal descriptions - Perec's imagistic passages (dreams, nightmares, etc).

Pictorial vividness is reduced when visibility is replaced by other types of description (historical, scientific, etc.), in lists of objects to which no description is attached and, paradoxically, when precision is taken to the extreme. The best example of this kind of blankness is the first chapter of LC where the description is extremely precise but so much so that, after a while, there is no space left in the reader's image of the room to fit in any more details and the room, with all its contents, gradually vanishes as the author piles on yet more details. In Vme some descriptions reach the same point of saturation:

> "Il n'y a aucun tableau sur les murs, car les murs et les portes sont eux-mêmes décor: ils sont revêtus d'une toile peinte, un panorama somptueux dont les quelques effets de trompe-l'oeil laissent penser qu'il s'agit d'une copie exécutée spécialement pour cette pièce à partir de cartons vraisemblablement plus anciens, représentant la

> vie aux Indes telle que l'imagination populaire pouvait la concevoir dans la deuxième moitié du dix-neuvième siècle: d'abord une jungle luxuriante peuplée de singes aux yeux énormes, puis une clairière aux bords d'un marigot dans lequel trois éléphants s'ébrouent en s'aspergeant mutuellement; plus loin encore des paillotes sur pilotis devant lesquelles des femmes en saris jaunes, bleu ciel et vert d'eau et des hommes vêtus de pagnes font sécher des feuilles de thé et des racines de gingembre cependant que d'autres, installés devant des bâtis de bois, décorent de grands carrés de cachemire à l'aide de blocs sculptés qu'ils trempent dans des pots remplis de teintures végétales; enfin, sur la droite, une scène classique de chasse au tigre: entre une double haie de cipayes agitant des crécelles et des cymbales, s'avance un éléphant richement caparaçonné avec, sur le front, une bannière rectangulaire à franges et à pompons, frappée d'un cheval ailé rouge; derrière le cornac accroupi entre les oreilles du pachyderme se dresse un palanquin dans lequel ont pris place un Européen à favoris roux coiffé du casque colonial et un maharadjah dont la tunique est incrustée de pierreries et dont le turban immaculé s'orne d'une longue aigrette maintenue par un énorme diamant; devant eux, à l'orée de la jungle, à demi sorti d'un sous-bois, un fauve aplati s'apprête à bondir."
>
> (Vme, 97-98)

Perec's precise descriptions have been regarded as visually blank, since excess in reality leads to non-visibility (for exemple Pawlikowska, 1982). As Diderot wrote in his 1767 "Salon":

> "Plus l'on détaille, plus l'image qu'on présente à l'esprit des autres diffère de celle qui est sur la toile. D'abord l'étendue que notre imagination donne aux objets est toujours proportionnée à l'énumération des parties. Il y a un moyen sûr de faire prendre à celui qui nous écoute un puceron pour un éléphant. Il ne s'agit que de pousser à l'excès l'anatomie circonstanciée de l'atome vivant."
>
> (Diderot 1767, 271-72)

This is true especially for Perec's early works (LC, UHQD); in his later texts,

though, the important issue is not so much to create imageless decors as to transform vision. When Perec lists, with extreme rigorousness, the food and drink he ingurgitated in the year 1974, or what can be seen from a café at Mabillon, the reader stops seeing single units and has an image of Perec's gastronomic life or of a portion of Parisian space. Many Perecquian texts work in this way: for Jms, Wse, BO and for most of his poetry, it is saturation that produces an image - but it is an image that is more profound, and belongs to the domain of narrative. As Perec says in an interview given in 1978:

> "Finalement, à force d'être méticuleux dans la description, pointilleux, on décolle du réel et cela produit quelque chose qui est de la fiction, du romanesque."
>
> (PL 1978, 9)

Finally, there is the case in which the description is neither vivid nor blank. It simply depends on the reader's imagination. The memory passages in which Valène remembers objects from the past (Ch. XVII and some of the "stairs" chapters) are image-makers for the reader who shares the same past. They appeal, like the "I remember"s of Jms, to a collective memory. Similarly, dreams, comparisons with paintings and popular images depend on the reader's visual culture and on his individual imaginative power.

These different types of description indicate the importance of the eye and sight both for the author and for his reader. Through language, Perec establishes two systems of vision: an outward vision, simply seeing what is clearly shown, and an inward vision, using inner and subjective referents.

Through structure, the structure of the book and that of the sentence, he elaborates a highly visual strategy that comes close to the painterly techniques used in art. Perspective and composition are the two techniques which allow the writer to mis-"lead" the reader's eye.

c) Perspective and illusion

Chapter two suggested some "itineraries" linking the ten artists on Perec's Paintings List together and these to the author. One more itinerary ought to be mentioned here: the one that takes into account the different uses of perspective and the ways in which the artist "leads" the viewer's eye.

In the Middle Ages, paintings presented such a profusion of details that the viewer perceived them simultaneously, then took a closer look at details chosen more or less at random. A good example of this is Bosch, who had a medieval eye despite the fact that he was not a medieval artist.

In the Renaissance, with the new discoveries in optics, the point of view changed. Alberti was amongst the first to set the mathematical rules of the costruzione leggittima. Taking up the Euclidean idea that the field of vision was to be seen as a pyramid with its vertex in the viewer's eye, he constructed a system by which the painting was to be a cross-section of the visual pyramid. This type of perspective meant that the painting could only be seen correctly if the viewer stood at the exact point from which the artist painted the picture or studied the angle of vision. For the first time in Art History, the artist and his viewer shared the same point of view. Carpaccio, Giorgione and Antonello all used Albertian perspective. It is clear, for example, that Antonello's "Saint Jerome" is orchestrated around the centrepiece of the saint reading.

In Northern Europe, Van Eyck and Flemish painters after him, used a different kind of perspective based on the accumulation of layers of colour so that depth was given by contrast of tone rather than by symmetrical lines. Another feature of the Flemish eye is lenticular vision. Van Eyck painted every tiny little detail, some of them so minute that they can only be seen in reproductions (the ten scenes depicting the passion of Christ on the frame of the mirror).

Mannerists then distorted the Albertian box in order to deceive the viewer. In Perec's list there are no mannerists as such but there are a couple of examples of mannerist perspective: the composition of Velasquez' "Meninas", where the mirror is

there to confuse the viewer, and the anamorphic effect of the skull in Holbein's "Ambassadors", where the object is so distorted that one can only see it from a certain angle (see above pp. 98-99).

Anamorphosis is based on the same mathematical rules as Albertian perspective. The image is deconstructed, then the vanishing point is set in an awknard spot, as if the viewer was too near the painting or completely to one side. The end result is that the image can only be seen from that particular point, or through optical instruments such as a glass cylinder or a rolled up reflecting surface. One of the properties of anamorphoses then, is to hide the image without really hiding it, in a sort of game of hide-and-seek that is reminiscent of Perec's writing in Wse:

> "Une fois de plus, je fus comme un enfant qui joue à cache-cache et qui ne sait pas ce qu'il craint ou désire le plus: rester caché, être découvert."
>
> (Wse, 14)

If the aim of all perspective is to create an illusion, the illusion of the third dimension, anamorphosis and its counter-part, the trompe l'oeil, operate through a system of transgressions. Roland Barthes, in "Le Démon de l'analogie" considers these two mechanisms as two devices that turn analogy into ridicule:

> "Par deux excès contraires ou, si l'on préfère, deux ironies qui mettent l'Analogie en dérision, soit en feignant un respect spectaculairement plat (c'est la Copie), soit en déformant régulièrement - selon les règles - (c'est l'Anamorphose)."
>
> (Barthes 1975, 48, quoted in Baltrusaitis 1976, unpaged)

According to Barthes, anamorphosis and trompe l'oeil amount, in principle, to the same thing, in that the first deforms the real so that the image is no longer recognisable, and the latter reproduces it with such exactitude that it verges on irreality.

The myth associated with Pygmalion's power - the perfect reproduction of reality in trompe l'oeil painting - is the myth of creation: by reproducing a life-like

image the artist identifies himself with God (this is why in Jewish art only imperfect figures are accepted). The mechanism of illusion is triggered off when the system of projections is not respected. Information theory and Rorschach tests have shown that the message that most fulfils the receiver's expectations is the message that carries very little information so that the beholder can project his own vision and fill the gaps (in Gombrich's terms, the "etc. principle"). Trompe l'oeil relies on expectations but leaves no room for projections. The message is so complete that the beholder starts doubting his own perception. Where he expected to find a wall, he finds a marble staircase, carrying all the "signs" of reality: the wear and tear of human footsteps, cracks on the wall, etc. Where he expected to see a marble staircase, he realises that it is all make-believe. Like forgery, trompe l'oeil is an art of deception; like forgery, the fascination that it exerts on the viewer springs from the realisation of having been duped:

> "nous avons été égarés, induits en erreur, on nous a fait pendant un instant douter de nos sens, et dans cette brève et éphémere mystification se révèle quelque chose qui est de l'ordre du magique, du merveilleux, un étonnement délicieusement borgésien, où un vague sentiment d'improbable s'empare de ce que nous voyons, où un léger doute se met à exister à propos de ce qui est vrai et ce qui est faux, où il n'y a plus de limite précise à la réalité, mais un flottement, une hésitation".
>
> (L'Oeil ébloui, unpaged)

For a moment, it questions the viewer's perception and it introduces what could be called after Perec the "What if principle" ("Si une 'vraie' maison s'élevait là où il n'y a qu'un mur, si des vrais jardins à la française s'étalaient au-delà de ces grandes baies vitrées [...]", L'Oeil ébloui, unpaged). In Vme, these five "principles of vision" (Medieval, Renaissance, Northern Europe Renaissance, Mannerism and the illusionist procedures of anamorphosis and trompe l'oeil) may be found in the two epigraphs alone, before even beginning to read the book. The first epigraph - "Regarde de tous tes yeux, regarde" - is an invitation to use one's medieval eye and look at everything. The reference given in brackets (Jules Verne, Michel Strogoff) adds another layer of

meaning and distorts the message: the quotation comes in Verne's novel at the point when the hero is about to be blinded (p. 333), and alerts the reader to the fact that he can indeed look with all his eyes but what he shall see is not necessarily everything. With the second epigraph, Perec takes an Albertian stand when he quotes Paul Klee: "L'oeil suit les chemins qui lui ont été ménagés dans l'oeuvre". Paul Klee's words act as a second reminder that what the reader shall see is what the author intended to show him. Eric Beaumatin (1990, 10) warned Perec scholars against the "terrorism" of those who interpret Klee's exergue only as an expropriation of the reader's personal judgement (see also p. 37-38 above). The Verne epigraph seems to point in this direction. In Michel Strogoff, the hero keeps coming face to face with his mother but has to hide his emotions in order to keep his identity secret. He is captured by the enemy because he could no longer pretend, but, just as the executioner is about to pass the incandescent sword in front of his eyes, he sees his mother, once again. Tears rise to his eyes and prevent the heat from blinding him (although, of course, he will pretend to be blind to complete his mission). The constant play between sight and deception, summarized by the menacing refrain "Regarde de tous tes yeux, regarde" is taken up by Perec who establishes a similar game with his reader. In the end what matters is not so much what the reader sees but the act of looking, the way he looks, and the different ways in which the author creates optical illusions.

Just as the two epigraphs encompass the five principles of vision, so Vme, as a whole, comprises all of these optical strategies, some of which have already been discussed in this chapter. It is worth, though, recapitulating those aspects in relation to the five illusionist devices discussed in this section.

• The medieval profusion of details can be seen in the saturation of space with objects and details.

• The Albertian perspective in the ordered descriptions which use cinematographic techniques like the travelling or the zoom effect.

• The Flemish aerial perspective in the layering of different registers and styles and in

the obfuscation of borrowed material (cf. Hutting and Winckler). The attention to detail and the precision of descriptions may be found in passages where Perec not only tells the reader that there is a book on the table but also gives the bibliographical references and the number of the page at which the book is opened ("18 leçons sur la société industrielle" de R. Aron in G. Simpson's room, "abandonné à la page 112", Vme, 307)

• Anamorphosis can be seen in the systematic fragmentation of space, characters, reality, literature, art, autobiography, etc., and the insertion of the details in an order which transforms the image and that requires a few readings, with the help of the index, before it can be seen.

• Trompe l'oeil in the "art of deception" with which Perec falsifies information and blurs the distinction between real and false (discussed in the section on ekphrasis on pp. 158-160 above, and in relation to the figure of Gaspard Winckler).

Another aspect which could be classed in this category is the mixture of minimal description where the reader can apply the "etc. principle" and the extremely precise ones of the "what if" kind which encourage the reader to look up in the dictionary if Kusser really existed (Vme, 43) or in a Paris plan to see if there is a Rue Simon-Crubellier in the seventeenth arrondissement.

It should be noted, though, that Perec's interest in anamorphosis and trompe l'oeil is perhaps more an interest in these art forms as potential simulacra for his own writing strategies than an interest in their artistic value: deconstruction, gap-filling, distortion, hyper-reality and all of the terminology used for these two techniques mirror Perec's own writing.

All these strategies are very similar to the games artists play with their viewers. One of the ways a writer can lead the reader's eye "to follow the path that has been laid out for him" is through language and, precisely, through the structure of the sentence.

The minimal structure is, of course, the list, which allows Perec to fill the space with a profusion of details of the medieval kind. Some of the descriptions of the cellars in Rue Simon-Crubellier are lists which give the impression of clutteredness or abundance.

As for a possible Albertian structure this could be, for instance, the description of Rorschash's vestibule in Chapter XIII:

> "Un seul meuble, au centre: un vaste bureau Empire, dont le fond est garni de tiroirs séparés par des colonnettes de bois formant un portique central dans lequel est encastrée une pendule dont le motif sculpté représente une femme nue couchée à côté d'une petite cascade."
>
> (Vme, 69)

The description consists of just one sentence with a number of subordinate clauses which lead the reader's eye from the general view of the "bureau Empire" to the central detail of the little statue.

The Flemish view is rendered through the accumulation of layers, that is to say the paratactical juxtaposition of clauses as, for example, the description of the Marquiseaux's living-room in Chapter IV:

> "Sur le mur un papier peint imitant la toile de Jouy représente de grands navires à voile, de quatre-mâts de type portugais, armés de canons et de couleuvrines, se préparant à rentrer au port; le grand foc et la brigantine sont gonflés par le vent; des marins, grimpés dans les cordages, carguent les autres voiles."
>
> (Vme, 32)

Also important here is the the magnifying-glass effect, the lenticular vision. Not only does Perec describes the wallpaper but also the sailors on the masts, who must be extremely small unless the wallpaper is in bad taste.

The mannerist sentence is typified by those sentences that distort the message. One case would be when Perec adds, at the end of a paragraph or a page, a sentence that changes the meaning of what precedes, forcing the reader to go back and re-read it in a different way. In Chapter II he describes the archeological excavations of Ferdinand de Beaumont. The description ends with the stark "Puis, le 12 novembre 1935, il se suicida" something for which the reader was totally unprepared since there is not so much as the slightest inkling of such a finale in the rest of the chapter. This is what

Andrew Leak calls the "deferred-action sentence-structure" (Leak 1988, 146). This principle is explained in David Bellos's "Perec's Puzzling style (Bellos 1988, 72), from which this example is taken.

Finally, trompe l'oeil structures may be identified in those sentences or expressions that reproduce in their form a type of discourse that does not usually belong to fiction. Examples of this would be the reproduction of the "Bulletin de l'Institut de Linguistique de Louvain" (Vme, 333) in which figure perfectly plausible titles and in which the typographical conventions of this type of publication are respected: or the entry for Mark Twain (Vme, 43) which may well be taken from an "educational postcard in the Great American Writers series" but in any case uses the same register (brackets for references, economy of style, etc.):

> *"Mark T wain, de son vrai nom Samuel Langhorne Clemens, est né à Florida, dans le Missouri, en 1835. Il perdit son père à douze ans. Apprenti dans une imprimerie, il devint pilote sur le Mississippi et en garda le sobriquet de Mark Twain (expression signifiant littéralement «Marque deux fois» et invitant le matelot à mesurer le tirant d'eau au moyen d'une ligne de sonde). Il fut successivement soldat, mineur dans le Nevada, chercheur d'or et journaliste. Il voyagea en Polynésie, en Europe, en Méditerranée, visita la Terre sainte et, déguisé en Afghan, alla en pèlerinage aux villes saintes d'Arabie. Il mourut à Redding (Connecticut) en 1910 et sa mort coincida avec la réapparition de la Comète de Halley qui avait marqué sa naissance. Quelques années auparavant, il avait lu dans un journal qu'il était mort et avait aussitôt câblé au directeur le télégramme suivant:* LA NOUVELLE DE MA MORT EST FORT EXAGEREE! *Néanmoins les soucis financiers, la mort de sa femme et d'une de ses filles, et la follie de son autre fille, assombrirent les dernières années de cet humoriste et donnèrent à ses oeuvres ultimes un climat de gravité inhabituel. Principales oeuvres:* La célèbre grenouille sauteuse de Calaveras (1867), Innocents en voyage (1869), A la dure (1872), L'âge doré (1873), Les Aventures de Tom Sawyer (1875), Le Prince et le pauvre (1882), Sur le Mississippi (1883), Les Aventures de Huckleberry Finn (1885), Le Yankee du Connecticut à la cour du Roi Arthur (1889), Jeanne d'Arc (1896), Ce qu'est l'Homme (1906), Le Mystérieux Etranger (1916)."
>
> (Vme, 565-566)

The Challenge of Fragmentation

The artist's first task in a pictorial composition is to make an inventory of all the elements of the chosen subject and select those he wishes to include in his composition, that is to say he has to be able not only to discern the smallest details but also to know what to leave out. The aim is to reach an harmonious balance between important and irrelevant (or decorative) elements, each of which will have its place on the canvas. The literary composition does not have to be rigorously chronological (flashbacks and dreams are frequently used) but even less does it have to be spatial. On the other hand, a notion of sequential time is implied in the use of devices like the flashback, since disruption of order of narration presupposes that there is indeed an order. Similarly, novels that are organised in terms of space cannot avoid the time factor. For example, in Michel Butor's Passage de Milan which is, like, Vme, the description of a building, the novel evolves in time as the narrator moves from one apartment to another (each chapter corresponding to one hour from seven pm to seven am the next morning).

Vme being in its entirety a flashback, its composition cannot be based on a chronological order. At the same time, the rooms of the apartment-block are not described in the order in which a visitor would encounter them (ground floor, first, second, third floor). The creation of a non-linear narrative pattern is obtained through the use of the knight's tour (see Chapter 3), which allows the transition from a rigorously ordered grid to an apparently disordered narration.

Like the game of chess, then, the novel starts with a perfectly ordered and symmetrical structure but, after a few moves, disorder reigns, only in this case it is a disorder that has been "designed, calculated and decided" by the two players. In chess games, the knight is a somewhat privileged figure as it is the only one that can jump other chessmen. Vladimir Nabokov, the chess-novelist par excellence, had used the chess metaphor to describe the game between the author and the reader:

> "It should be understood that the competition in chess-problems is not really between White and Black but between the composer and the hypothetical solver (just as in a first rate work of fiction the real clash is not between the characters but between the author and the world"
>
> (Nabokov 1951, 218)

The parallel may apply also to the game Perec engages with his reader (2). The knight's tour, though, is not a game but a chess-problem. As such it implies a series of traps deliberately set by the composer. One of the traps set by Perec is the bizarre composition according to which a set of rooms belonging to the same owner is described in chapters that are dozens or hundreds of pages apart.

In fact, Vme as a whole, is a monument to the art of fragmentation. Not only stories, characters and space are fragmented but also snippets of Perec's life, quotations, allusions, and the different items of the cahier des charges are scattered throughout the novel. Life, literature and art are thus systematically dissected and pieces inserted in a different order. Meaning and/or fiction arise by putting these unconnected fragments side by side (3) . Reflections of this process may be found in the many references to patchworks, puzzles and games as well as in some of the characters' activities. To name but one example, Olivier Gratiolet attempts to read books with missing pages by reconstructing the possible links in his mind. Above all, Bartlebooth's project and the figure of Winckler, the king of fragmentation, whose story is placed at the core of the novel, is the example that best mirrors this aspect.

The idea of "word-montage", to use David Bellos's definition, springs, in part, from Eisenstein's concept of montage in film-making (Bellos 1992b, 329). It is also a process that belongs to the very principle of perception or at least to the active attitude of the observer. Paul Virilio pointed out in a lecture delivered at the University of Paris VII (1991) that in military strategies the look-out man is taught to divide space in longitudinal bands and look from right to left and vice versa along these imaginary section; in more recent defence systems radars divide the aerial space into concentric circles. In art, a similar division of space has been in use since the Renaissance.

Alberti in Della Pittura set the rules that will enable the painter to place all the details of the picture in relation to each other and to manipulate the viewer's eye so that he shares the same point of view. Drawing largely from the terminology of rhetoric he talked of the varietas and copia of elements that had to be ordered in a compositio and introduced the use of a grid (retino) to help the painter in this task. It was not a Latin bi-

square, but it served the same purpose. Paul Klee, a few centuries later, takes a similar stand in his Pedagogical Sketchbooks, when he describes the transformation of the static dot into linear dynamics. For Klee, too, the art work "grows 'stone upon stone' (additive)" or is "hewn 'chip from chip' (subtractive)" - in other words, painting is a matter of perceiving single units and stucturing them into a whole. He asserts the power of the creator over the receiver whose perception is limited by the fact that he can only grasp very small portions of space at any one time. The key sentence that summarizes the relevant section of the Pedagogical Sketchbooks is the one Perec chose as one of the epigraphs of Vme: "The eye follows the paths that have been laid out for it in the work".

In literature, description is the system that comes closer to such a fragmentation (4). Whereas a narrative passage logically follows a time constraint, description unnaturally breaks up perceptive units and makes them follow one another as if the eye did work in slow succession.

Perec uses space and time in a very special way: on the one hand these two entities are, as we have seen, continuously fragmented and reconstructed; on the other composition helps to create a temporal and, above all, a spatial continuity.

The originality of Vme: Perec's Japanese scroll

In order to understand the difference between literary and painterly composition it is necessary to cast one's mind back to the Aristotelian distinction between diachronic and synchronic forms, whose most famous proponent is Lessing (Laokoon, 1766). According to this idea literature is a narration evolving in time (diachronic) while painting, having a stable and independent self-existence, deals with space (synchronic) (see, for instance, Bryson 1988, Chaffee 1984, McCormick 1987). Following this distinction, literary composition ought to be a structure that permits the evolution of the story while the concern of the pictorial composition should be to place all the elements in the space of the canvas. There are, of course, exceptions to this rule. Paintings may be narrative as, for example, Steinberg's "The Art of living" (see above, Chapter 1) and novels may develop in space (Vme). One exception that is particularly relevant in this

context is Japanese scrolls, an art form in which Perec took an interest in the late 1960s, early 70s (5).

A Japanese scroll consists of a sequence of pictures with a narrative intent: they usually depict the deeds of warriors and samurais, anecdoctes from the lives of famous people, popular stories or itineraries along main roads ("53 Stations of the Tokaido Highway", Fig. 38). There are two kinds of Japanese scroll: one is divided into self-contained pictures and could be compared to a series of slides or a comic strip. The other, more interesting, is a continuous series of pictures similar to the the long strips one inserts in magic lanterns. In this case the transition between one scene and the next is indicated by blurred contours or by a series of narrow streaks - Kasumi, literally fog or mist. (The "paysage à manivelle" which, in UCDA, relates Gaspard Winckler's life, pp. 42-45, follows this principle) (6).

Whether the scenes are clearly defined or not the most important element in this layout is time: the time of the story, which usually follows a chronological narration, and the time of viewing. Looking at scrolls is very different from looking at Western paintings. Some museums have hung them on the wall whereas, in fact, scrolls were not made to be exhibited in this manner but were meant to be "read". Normal viewing consists in unrolling the scroll, on a table, from right to left, so that the reader can only see the portion of scroll that the width of his open arms can hold (usually 40-60 cm.). The greatest pleasure is thus anticipation, a pleasure that is usually associated with reading.

Fig. 38. Ando Hiroshige, "Passersby caught in a shower at Shoya".
From "The 53 Stages of the Tokaido Highway".

Moreover, the Japanese artist does not aim at creating an "illusion" to impose upon the viewer. If details and secondary elements are very precise, the main parts (skies, horizons, figures) are only suggested, with little concern for illusionist devices such as chiaroscuro, relief and perspective, or even, sometimes, left unfinished. He appeals to the reader's imagination to fill the gaps. Speaking about Saul Steinberg's drawing (Fig.39) Gombrich writes:

> "He knows that the consistency test will make us transform any line according to context [...] Steinberg's trick drawings serve as a welcome reminder that it is never space that is represented but familiar things in situation"
>
> (Gombrich 1960, 239-40)

Steinberg's line that becomes a washing line, a rail track, and a sitting-room ceiling, like Klee's "Ville de lagune" (Fig. 40), make space and linear continuity strangely equivalent. Similarly, the Japanese scroll artist aims at giving a sense of space rather than a sense of depth. The idea of space as a continuum, as transitional, as the "place where things happen" (Pierre Getzler) is intimately linked with the notion of time.

Fig. 39. Saul Steinberg, untitled drawing from The New Yorker (1954)

Fig. 40. Paul Klee, "City of Lagoons" (1927) Berne, private collection

This is why subjects like the Tokaido Highway are very popular. The Tokaido is a very long and picturesque road where every station with its inns, restaurants and shopping areas provides a catalogue of human beings: the merchant, the businnessman, the priest, the pauper in pilgrimage and so on. The main point of these scrolls, even when they relate the story of saints and heroes, is to portray what they call "the floating world" (ukiyo-e), all the simple pleasures in life, the ordinary or, in Perecquian terms, the "infra-ordinary".

The point of view is necessarily different. The immobility of Western perspective built on the optical laws of the pyramid only works for self-contained pictures. The continuity of Japanese scrolls calls for a mobile perspective. The Eastern vision is based on the principle of the three co-ordinates (horizontal, vertical and diagonal) with a transition point (the point zero) in which the point of view changes almost without the viewer noticing. The diagonal perspective is often used for interiors, associated with the device of taking off the roof, because it allows the artist to egress from the four walls of the building and lead the eye outwards onto the garden and the surrounding landscape. It also takes into account the viewer's mode of perception (the scroll is usually unrolled on a low table and is therefore seen from above) and introduces an element of voyeurism. The detached point of view, the myth of the observer, has always been associated with the artist, even in the West, but here it is taken literally. The artist, from his vantage point, can depict people going about their business rather than posing for a portrait.

In Eastern eyes it is the line, and the line only, that suggests movement, a movement which is that of life itself. One of the criticisms made by Eastern artists of the West is that artists fix life, that they portray people "living as if every moment was the last" (McLuhan and Parker 1968, 12). In Vme it is almost as if Perec took up the challenge and wanted to show that if Western art, in this case literature, did indeed portray people "living as if every moment was the last", the opposite could just as well be true: Vme may be designed to say, on a grand scale, that the novel portrays somebody's last moment as if it were "Life".

Vme starts a few minutes before eight on 23 June 1975 and ends at eight o'clock. In these few minutes only one thing happens : the death of the main character, Percival Bartlebooth. What takes up 99% of the rest of the book is life in all its forms. Just as Hiroshige found all the material he needed along the Tokaido road, so Perec finds it in a Parisian building. Similarly, some of the aspects discussed with respect to Japanese scrolls echo Perec's writing: the mixture of extremely precise details and of descriptions that rely on the reader's imagination to fill the gaps; the author's intrusion by means of the removal of the façade; the diagonal perspective. This last point is particularly relevant as Valène's post, like the observer in the Genji monogatari scroll, is located in the top right hand corner. It is again diagonally that the author is encrypted in Valène's painting, although the inscription of the Great Acrostic, "âme", may also be seen as the soul of the book, or in Lukács's terms, as the world of essence (see page 40 above). In fact many things may be said about Perec's use of the diagonal (Magné 1990, 143-80). The main point, for our purposes, is that, like Eastern perspective, the diagonal dimension allows the author to egress into a metadiegetic dimension (cf. Chapter 1) and into a different time-scale (Valène's memory).

However, Perec's answer to the Eastern criticism is the answer of a Western man, drawing largely from his own tradition but very different from the existing models. In 1975 Roland Barthes denounced the fictional procedures that destroyed duration and transformed life into fiction. The use of the past historic, third person narration and the use of "ornaments" ("fine writing") replaced life's natural disorder with a fictional order that reassured the reader. Perec does destroy duration, literally, since the minumum time span of the novel (Bartlebooth's death) is too short, but he comes back, to a certain extent, to a "writing degree zero" - the use of the present and the scarcity of ornaments are consistent with Barthes' ideas (Bellos, GPLW, 625-626). On the other hand the interplay between different durations (Bartlebooth's death, Steinberg's drawing, Valène's painting, Valène's memory), different kinds of narration (first and third person), and the different registers, makes the order of Vme an order that is closer to life and based on space (the unity of space being almost respected).

Georges Perec's space is nonetheless a transitional one. Like the Tokaido Highway, 11 rue Simon-Crubellier is not a fixity but the space in which things have happened, are happening and will go on happening.

Conclusion

In Vme and, broadly speaking, in Perec's writing, artists and art works are used as metaphors for the author's work. The narrative potential attached to some of the paintings also provides material for fiction production; scenes represented on canvas may also be translated into descriptive passages. Yet, the presence of artists and art works emphasizes above all the new role which art has in Perec's writing. It does not in itself exhaust the author's originality in the use of paintings and painterly techniques.

Speaking about his collaboration with artists Perec said:

> "Il y a des peintres dont j'ai tellement envie de parler que je sais que ce ne sont pas pour moi les plus grands peintres parce que, d'une certaine manière, ils sont seulement le prétexte de mon discours et il y en d'autres devant lesquels, d'une certaine manière, je ne sais pas quoi dire. Et si je ne sais pas quoi dire, c'est à ce moment-là que va commencer le défi."
>
> (Bologna conf.)

The challenge is not so much to try to do verbally what the artist does in painting, which would be an impossible task, but to find a literary form which mirrors the artistic expression while remaining in his own field. A similar approach may be found in Perec's "collaboration" with his artistic sources (Klee and Antonello da Messina in the early 60s, Renaissance artists, Japanese scrolls in the late 60s, Steinberg in the 70s). In each case Perec's sensitivity and understanding of his source led to a reflection on his own process of artistic creation. Understanding the work of these artists rather than the way in which some of them are inserted in the text, is therefore fundamental to understanding Perec's "painterly" writing.

Useful as it may be, our analysis of the insertion into Vme of fragments from a list of ten paintings and of an impressive number of art works has revealed that Perec's practice defies all classification. For this reason the pioneering work done by Bernard Magné falls a long way short of explaining Perec's use of painting. Each detail and

each painting has its own genesis and its own role in the overall structure of the novel. As this thesis has made clear some paintings remain mysterious; moreover it would be foolish to rule out the presence of a greater number of pictorial sources than those identified in the present work. However, reading Vme in a visually-informed way, "looking" at paintings and painterly practices as well as at letters and words, has allowed us to discover the relevance of a surprisingly great variety of Perec's artistic sources. It has also allowed us to see in a different light some of the most recurrent pictorial themes of Perec's whole literary enterprise, notably trompe l'oeil and forgery.

The painterly quality of Perec's writing is to be found above all in the use of pictorial techniques such as composition, fragmentation, perspective, and illusionist devices such as anamorphosis and trompe l'oeil. All of these techniques deconstruct the image perceived by the eye and reconstruct it in a more or less deceptive way. Perec's use of the structure of the sentence and his constant fragmentation of information which he then reconstructs in such a way as to puzzle his reader come close, on many occasions, to the way in which his artistic sources use space and vision.

Unlike the so-called "imagistic" writers who made use of pictorial metaphors to convey allegedly visual images, Perec takes the metaphor to its logical conclusion. It is not through rhetorical images that he arrives at a visually perceptible literature but by using the very fabric of the text in a way that comes near to the great masters of painting he studied so closely .

Since Aristotle the debate which opposed writers and artists has seen each group defend its own art as the medium which could best represent, or "make see", the real. Perec re-invented the debate in a new and challenging way. Perec's writing is neither imagistic nor realistic, at least not in the sense conventionally attributed to these terms. Yet, by overlaying and falsifying fragments of life, literature and art, Perec arrives at a writing the boundaries of which overlap those of paintings and the graphic arts.

Like the Renaissance artists who used tradition to experiment with new forms, Perec, instead of disregarding literary tradition, integrated it in a massive programme of incorporation. Like Renaissance paintings which need to be deciphered in order to be fully appreciated, Perec's works call for a reader who is not only competent at the level of the text but who can also see and understand art.

"Perec me Pinxit"
Paintings and painterly practice in Georges Perec from Le Condottiere to La Vie Mode d'emploi

Vol. II of II

A Thesis submitted to
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for the degree of PhD, in the Faculty of Arts

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Contents

Volume II

Appendix 1

This appendix gives details of the visual fragments inserted in Vme. It draws its information from the "Cahier allusions et détails" (FP 68), giving the list of allusions for each painter (in alphabetical order) ; the typescript published in CGPI, which reproduces with some omissions the "Cahier allusions et détails" ; and the cahiers des charges for each chapter (FP 61).

The asterisk at the end of the quotation on the left hand side indicates that Perec had the visual fragment already "pre-cut" in a book on the painter (references are given at the bottom of the relevant page). The quotations sources for the description of the detail are given, when appropriate, in the right hand column.

Chapter	Allusion	Context	Sources/remarks
1	"petit chaudron de cuivre" (p. 22)	Found in Winckler's apartment	
7	"coffre Renaissance" (p. 46)	In Plassaert's newly acquired bedroom.	
21	"Il s'est protégé la tête en la couvrant d'un mouchoir rouge noué aux quatre coins qui évoque vaguement une calotte de cardinal." (p. 107)	Worn by gas inspector in the boiler room.	
25	"la serviette de lin bise à franges, à double bordure bistre, pendue à un clou". (p. 146)	Appenzzel staring at it.	
27	"les deux pots à pieds coniques, décorés de chevrons noirs et blancs, plantés de touffes bleuâtres de romarin". * (p.159)	In Valène's painting of the Grifalconis.	
33	"cet homme manifestement presbyte, en train de lire un livre posé sur un pupitre incliné".* (p. 205)	Photograph of Gérard Gratiolet.	replaces faux for "Meninas"
43	"Anton/16 bis, avenue de Messine, surmontant une silhouette de lion". (p. 244)	False visiting card found at Paul Hebert's.	
44	"un pupitre avec un livre ouvert". (p. 250) "un oranger nain" (p. 251)	Piece of puzzle	Supplement ch.44 : also "un pupitre avec un livre ouvert" but it is not mentioned in the ms.
51 (59)	"Lion"* (p.292, 350)	Stone lion found by Hutting.	
53	"un paysage tout entier avec un ciel bleu pâle parsemé de petits nuages blancs, un horizon de collines mollement ondulées aux flancs couverts de vignes, un château, deux routes au croisement desquelles galopait un cavalier vêtu de rouge monté sur un cheval bai, un cimetière avec deux fossoyeurs portant des bêches, un cyprès, des oliviers, une rivière bordée de peupliers avec trois pêcheurs assis au bord des rives, et, dans une barque, deux tout petits personnages vêtus de blanc."* (p. 309)	Painted by Marguerite Winckler in 3x4 cm. frames.	
65	"un spectaculaire carrelage, alternance de rectangles blancs, gris et ocre parfois décorés de motifs en losange, qui était la copie fidèle du sol de la chapelle d'un monastère de Bethléem." (p. 394)	In Madame Moreau's apartment (designed by Fleury)	
66	"a) "un paon (*peacock*), vu de profil, épure sévère et rigide où le plumage se ramasse en une masse indistincte et presque terne et auquel seuls le grand œil bordé de blanc et l'aigrette en couronne donnent un frisson de vie".* (p. 397) b) "quelques livres enluminés avec des reliures et des fermoirs de métal incrustés d'émaux." (p.397)	Books in Madame Marcia's shop	

* L'Opera completa di Antonello da Messina. Rizzoli, 1967.

Chapter	Allusion	Context	Sources/remarks
15	"une partition de musique, d'un format à l'italienne, ouverte" . (p. 85)	Engraving ("Laborynthus") at Smautf's.	
30	"une mandore du XVIIe siècle sur la table de laquelle étaient gravées les silhouettes d'Arlequin et de Colombine en dominos." (p. 179)	Only precious object possessed by Philippe Marquiseaux.	
38	"valet de trèfle" (p. 221)	Drawn by S.Valène to replace a missing one.	
55	"des tranches grillées de ce pain rond utilisé pour le pan bagnats." (p. 323)	Used in a recipe invented by Henri Fresnel.	
60	"sur une feuille [...] trois œillets dans un vase de verre à corps sphérique, à col court, avec pour seule légende'peint avec la bouche et les pieds' et, entre parenthèses 'aquarelle véritable'." (p. 359)	At Cinoc's	
63	"une aumônière, une bourse de cuir vert fermée par un cordonnet de cuir noir". (p. 379)	Worn by the lady in the stairs looking for her cat.	
68	"un échiquier de voyage, en cuir synthétique, avec des pièces magnétiques". (p. 407)	Found in the stairs	Not mentioned in the "Cahier allusions et détails".
80	"une assiette octagonale en étain sur laquelle sont posés deux morceaux de sucre". (p. 480)	On Bartlebooth's bedside table	
95	"le très beau verre de cristal taillé". (p. 570)	Within a list of "dead" objects at Rorschash's	

Chapter	Allusion	Context	Sources/remarks
5	Programmed manque		
11	"un moine, gros et court, assis, tenant dans sa main droite un gobelet; il est vêtu d'une longue robe grise, avec une cordelière; sa tête et ses épaules sont pris dans un capuchon noir".* (p. 63)	Ice bucket at Hutting's.	
18	"un bœuf portant sur son dos un homme nu, casqué, qui tient dans sa main gauche un ciboire".* (p. 93)	Statue at Rorschash's.	
47	"la carte représentant un homme armé d'un bâton, portant besace et poursuivi par un chien, que l'on nomme le mat, c'est-à-dire le fou."* (p. 269)	Tarot card in a painting at Dinteville's.	
52	"des maçons en train de construire un château d'eau."* (p. ??)	?	
71	"l'arracheur de dents avec son bonnet rouge et ses prospectus multicolores ; et le joueur de cornemuse qui l'accompagnait et qui soufflait dans ses tuyaux le plus fort possible et horriblement faux pour couvrir les cris des malheureux patients." * (p. 425)	Madame Moreau's memory of her native town.	
74	"un monde de larves et de bêtes, avec des êtres sans yeux traînant des carcasses d'animaux, et des monstres démoniaques à corps d'oiseau, de porc ou de poisson, et des cadavres séchés, squelettes revêtus d'une peau jaunâtre".* (p. 447)	Valène's image of the basement.	
88	"Elle [la tapisserie] représente très vraisemblablement les Rois Mages: ce sont trois personnages, l'un agenouillé, les deux autres debout, dont un seul est resté à peu près intact: il porte une longue robe avec des manches à crevés; une épée est pendue à sa taille et il tient dans la main gauche une sorte de drageoir; il a des cheveux noirs et est coiffé d'un curieux chapeau orné d'un médaillon, tenant à la fois du béret, du tricorne, de la couronne et du bonnet." (p. 533)	Wallpaper at the Altamont's.	Faux : comes from Bosch's "Epiphany", not from the "Hay Wagon".
90	"le curieux emblème que, toute sa vie, il [Lord Ashtray] a associé à ses activités : une pomme rouge cordiforme transpercée de part en part par un long ver et entourée de petites flammes." (p. 551)	Lord Ashtray's emblem.	
93	"une sorte de diable à longue queue hissant au sommet d'une échelle un large plateau rond couvert de mortier."* (p. 562)	Engraving hung in the 3rd fl. right apartment (n°11).	Not in "Cahier allusions et details"

*** Jacques Combe, Bosch. Ed. Pierre Tisné, coll. Promethée, 1946.**

Chapter	Allusion	Context	Sources/remarks
4	"Sur le mur un papier peint imitant la toile de Jouy représente de grands navires à voiles des quatre-mâts de type portugais, armés de canons et de couleuvrines, se préparant à rentrer au port ; le grand foc et la brigantine sont gonflés par le vent; des marins, grimpés dans les cordages, carguent les autres voiles."* (p. 32)	Wallpaper at Marquiseaux's.	Quotation from La Chute d'Icare, p. 36
24	"Celui du dessus représente un décor champêtre où alternent un paysan labourant son champ et un berger qui, appuyé sur sa houlette, le chapeau rejeté dans le dos, son chien en laisse, ses mouton dispersés tout autour de lui, lève les yeux vers le ciel."* (p. 139)	Wallpaper at Marcia's.	
48	"un paysan grec avec un espèce de grand béret, une chemise rouge et un gilet gris, poussant sa charrue."* (p. 273)	Postcard shown by Mme Albin to Jane Sutton.	Also list n°22 (couples) : labourage
49	"la toile de Jouy [...] qui représentait une scène champêtre et antique: [...] des moutons paîssant au milieu desquels se trouvait une brebis sombre".* (p. 281)	Wallpaper at Danglars'.	Also list n° 22 (couples) : paturage
50	"[le tableau] représente un paysage de bord de mer avec au premier plan une perdrix perchée sur la branche d'un arbre sec dont le tronc tordu et tourmenté jaillit d'un amas de rochers, qui s'évase en une crique bouillonante. Au loin, sur la mer, une barque à voile triangulaire."* (p. 284)	In a painting ("L'Assassinat des poissons rouges").	
64	"Sa tapisserie violette [...] représentait une espèce de nativité : [...] le tout dans un paysage inattendu de falaises s'évasant en un port bien abrité avec des palais de marbre et des toits rosâtres estompés par une brume légère."* (p. 381)	Embroidery on Gratiolet's arm-chair.	
69	"Icarus" (p. 410)	Magazine at Altamont's.	
87	"un paysage intitulé *L'Ile mystérieuse* et signé L.N. Montalescot" (p. 516)	Painting at Bartlebooth.	Allusion to Verne and to Roussel (Montalescot)
92	Programmed manque		
97	"un tableau représentant un paysage avec un coucher de soleil."* (p. 587)	In a painting at Hutting's ("Eurydice").	

Breughel, La Chute d'Icare. Texts by Philippe Roberts-Jones. Office du Livre de Fribourg, 1974.

Chapter	Allusion	Context	Sources/remarks
2	"le visage ovale d'une jeune fille endormie ; ses cheveux blonds relevés en torsade au-dessus de son front sont maintenus par un double bandeau d'étoffe tressée ; sa joue s'appuie sur sa main droite repliée en conque comme si, en songe elle était en train d'écouter." (p. 23)	Detail of a puzzle at Beaumont's.	
16	"Elle est couchée dans son lit, sous une couverture de laine grise. Elle rêve: un croque-mort aux yeux brillants de haine se tient en face d'elle, debout, sur le pas de la porte; de sa main droite à demi levée il présente un bristol bordé de noir. Sa main gauche supporte un coussin rond sur lequel reposent deux médailles dont l'une est la Croix des Héros de Stalingrad." (p. 87)	Mademoiselle Crespi's dream.	
22	"vignettes hexagonales représentant un chevalier en armure pourfendant de sa lance le spectre de la grippe personnifié par un vieillard grincheux à plat ventre dans un paysage nappé de brume." (p. 116)	Trade-mark for James Sherwood's cough pastils.	Faux: comes from "Saint George and the Dragon"
	Ursula	Ursula Sobieski.	
26	"deux tabourets à trois pieds garnis d'une galette rouge à petites franges [...]" (p. 152)	In Bartlebooth's hall.	
34	"Le chaton ovale de la bague affecte la forme d'un camée dont la tête en relief s'efforce de représenter un jeune homme aux longs cheveux évoquant lointainement un portrait de la Renaissance italienne."(p. 206)	Ring worn by Berger.	
41	"Proud Angels" (p. 237)	Oratorio.	
44	"la table avec son tapis rouge à franges jaunes très claires, presque blanches [...]" (p. 250)	Detail of a puzzle at Bartlebooth's.	
83	"leur myrte dans son vase de cuivre rouge". (p. 497)	In Honorés's room.	
86	"trois statuettes peut-être antiques : un tout jeune Atlas portant sur son épaule gauche un globe en réduction [...]" (p. 511)	Statue at Rorschash's.	

Chapter	Allusion	Context	Sources/remarks
10	"[Jane Sutton] en page, debout, avec une culotte de brocart rouge à parements d'or, bas rouge clair, une chemise blanche, et un pourpoint court, sans col, de couleur rouge, à manches légèrement bouffantes, à rebords de soie jaune effrangée".* (p. 59)	Photograph of Jane Sutton disguised as Mercure.	
12	"dans le lointain, une bâtisse étroite et haute avec un balcon et un toit tronqué sur lequel est posée une cigogne." ** (p. 67)	Represented on a plate at Réols'.	
19	"une bannière rectangulaire à franges et à pompons , frappée d'un cheval ailé rouge."* (p. 98)	Wallpaper at Altamonts'.	
29	"*La Tempesta di mare*, concerto en mi bémol majeur, op.8, n° 5, d'Antonio Vivaldi, interprété au synthétiseur par Léonie Prouillot." (p. 175)	Record in the third floor apartment.	
32	"[une aquarelle] dont le tiers inférieur est occupé par une série de lignes brisées strictement parallèles et les deux tiers supérieurs par une représentation réaliste d'un ciel lourd avec effets d'orage."* (p. 199)	Watercolour reproduced on an invitation card for an exhibition of Silberselber's paintings.	
56	"un porte-parapluie: un haut cylindre de plâtre peint imitant une colonne antique." * (p. 332)	Stairs.	
58	"une planche de Zorzi de Castelfranco, disciple de Mondino Luzzi." (p. 342)	Author of a drawing in the anatomy book read by O. Gratiolet.	Tout l'œuvre peint, p.90 and Chefs d'œuvre
72	"la troisième [malle de Bartlebooth] offrait encore tout ce qu'il aurait fallu si, ayant fait naufrage par suite de tempête [...]" (p. 428)	Descri. of content of Bartlebooth's trunks	
77	"tissu imprimé, d'inspiration romantique, représentant une scène antique et pastorale : la nymphe Io allaitant son fils Epaphos sous la tendre protection du dieu Mercure."* (p. 456)	Bedcover at Louvets'	Tout l'œuvre, p.90 (modified)
94	"un impérmeable portant la marque 'Caliban', fabriqué à Londres par la Maison Hemminge & Condell". (p. 564)	Found in the stairs	Shakespeare's Tempest

* Tout l'oeuvre peint de Giorgione. Flammarion, 1971.
** Chefs d'oeuvres de l'art. Hachette, 1968.

Chapter	Allusion	Context	Sources/remarks
3	"une réception donnée en 1890 par Lord Radnor dans les salons de Longford Castle." (p. 30)	Illustration in a cookery book.	
14	"Dinteville"	Docteur Dinteville.	
36	"Fugger"	Altamont's friend.	Butor, p. 35.
45	*"Mensch willtu Leben seliglich / Und bei Gott bliben ewiglich/ Sollt du halten die zehen Gebot/ Die uns gebent unser Gott /* dont Monsieur Jérôme lui dit que c'était un choral de Luther publié à Wittenberg en 1524 dans le célèbre *Geystliches Gesangbuchlein* de Johann Walthe.* (p. 258)	Found par Madame Albin in Troquet's room.	Butor, p. 36.
46	"Une carte postale qui représentait un globe terrestre que son manche en bois tourné faisait ressembler à une toupie. C'était un des premiers globes connus, celui que Johannes Schoener, un cartographe ami de Copernic, avait exécuté en 1520 à Bamberg, et qui était conservé à la Bibliothèque de Nuremberg." (p. 266)	Postcard used by Monsieur Jérôme as a bookmark.	
59	a) The composition of Hutting's painting (p. 351) b) "Le sol, peint avec une précision extrême, est un carrelage géométrique dont les motifs reproduisent la mosaïque de marbre apportée de Rome vers 1268 par des artisans italiens pour le chœur de l'Abbaye de Westminster dont Robert Ware était alors abbé." (p. 351)	Descr. of Hutting's painting.	Butor, p. 37.
75	"Ambassadors" (p. 448) "Le Seigneur de Polisy" (p. 451)	Cinema advertised in the Pariscope. Title of a play produced by D. Marcia.	
81	"un béret orné de l'ancienne médaille de l'Ordre de Saint-Michel, représentant l'Archange en train de terrasser le Dragon" (p. 485)	Hat worn by O. Norvell.	In Holbein's painting the medal represents a skull.
85	"les colles historiques": "Qui était l'ami de John Leland ?" (p. 508)	Abel Speiss's games.	
89	"Il reste de ces splendeurs une nature morte représentant un luth sur une table : le luth est tourné vers le ciel, en pleine lumière, cependant que sous la table, presque noyé dans l'ombre, on discerne son étui noir renversé."* (p. 545)	Still-life at Madame Trévins.	Butor, p. 39. Not mentioned in the "Cahier Allusions et Details" since it comes from the Quotations List.
91	"un goniomètre, sorte de rapporteur en bois articulé, réputé avoir appartenu à l'astronome Nicolas Kratzer."* (p.556)	In Marcia's cellar.	Holbein, p. 102.

*** Tout l'oeuvre peint de Hans Holbein. Flammarion 1972.**

Butor, "Un tableau vu en détail" in Répertoire III. Ed. de Minuit, 1968.

Chapter	Allusion	Context	Sources/remarks
6	"des billes qui sont ici des perles de belle grosseur posées à droite de la plaque sur un petit coussin de soie noire." (p. 39)	Detail of an engraving at Breidel's ("Qui boit en mangeant...).	
8	"miroirs de sorcière"	Mirrors made by Gaspard Winckler.	cf. Verscharen: "miroir rond auquel on attribue souvent une valeur magique".
17	"Où étaient-elles [...] les boîtes de madeleines de Commercy en bois déroulé ?" (p. 91)	Valène's memory of objects that have disappeared.	
20	"un homme d'une quarantaine d'années, portant un blouson à col de fourrure, assis en plein air à une table campagnarde surchargée de victuailles". (p. 100)	Photograph on Madame Moreau's bed-side table (Monsieur Moreau?)	
42	"Statura justa et aequa sint pondere" (p. 241)	On magazine held by a man from a religious sect.	Article by Verscharen in Chefs d'oeuvre, n° 118
54	"Adèle et Jean Plassaerts sont assis l'un à côté de l'autre [...] Jean [...] un homme court et plutôt gras ; Adèle [...] petite et sèche, les lèvres minces. Elle est vêtue d'un tailleur de velours rouge avec un col de fourrure. Pour regarder la broche que son mari lui montre, elle a levé les yeux du livre qu'elle était en train de consulter: c'est un volumineux guide de l'Egypte". (p. 315)	Description of Madame Plassaert and pose of the couple.	
61	"une unique pomme rouge sur une assiette d' étain" (p. 367)	On side-board at Bergers'.	Chefs d'oeuvre: "le plat d'étain, la pomme sur l'étagère..."
62	"une petite boîte à poids telle qu'en utilisaient les changeurs et le peseurs d'or, boîte ronde dans laquelle les mesures cylindriques entrent les unes dans les autres à la manière des poupées russes." (p. 372)	Object at Altamonts'.	
67	"un roman vraisemblablement populaire intitulé *Les Epices ou la Vengeance du Ferronnier de Louvain*, et dont la couverture représente une jeune fille tendant un sac d'or à un juge." (p. 403)	Title of a novel kept in Rorschash's cellar.	Metsys was a locksmith in Louvain before becoming a painter.. The "Cahiers all. et dét." mentions "Petit Robert 1221 (fautif: ça doit être Massy+un horologer et un serrurier".
73	a) "plusieurs étagères de profondeurs et de hauteurs différentes, recouvertes d'un tissu vert gainé d'un ruban de cuir rouge fixé par des clous de cuivre à grosse tête, supportent tout un assortiment méticuleusement rangé de bibelots : [...] une balance de changeur d'or [...]" (p. 432)	In Madame Marcia's shop.	
	b) Massy	Albert Massy.	

* Chefs d'oeuvres de l'art. Hachette, 1968.

Chapter	Allusion	Context	Sources/remarks
37	"alcôve tendue de rideaux rouges avec un lit". (p. 218)	In Louvet's living-room.	
39	"Jeanne de Chénany". (p. 224)	Author of a series of engravings.	Name of Mrs. Arnolfini "Baedeker Londres, p. 127"
57	"[Madame Orlowska] essuie une petite suspension aux branches de cuivre ajouré qui semble une copie en réduction d'un lustre d'intérieur hollandais." (p. 334)	At Madame Orlowska's.	
76	"le jeune couple, lui prenant dans sa main la main ouverte qu'elle lui tend, debout devant des jonchées de roses éparpillées sur le luxueux tapis cloué à décor bleu." (p. 454)	Wedding photo in Beaumonts' cellar.	
78	"Pour protéger ses pieds inhabitués à rester nus sur ces sols caillouteux, ils lui fabriquèrent des sortes de socques de bois maintenus au pied par une large lanière de cuir et il s'y habitua si bien qu'il ne put jamais par la suite revenir aux chaussures à l'européenne." (p. 468)	Carel van Loorens.	
79	"[Olivia Norwell] épousa successivement un jeune premier [...] qui la quitta quatre mois plus tard pour un jeune Italien venu leur vendre une rose dans un restaurant de Bruges ; un lord anglais qui ne se séparait jamais de son chien, une sorte de petit barbet à poils frisés [...] Elle cherchait dans une librairie un livre sur *Les très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry* [...]" (p. 472)	Olivia Rorschash's ex-husbands.	1)Giovanni (Jean) Arnolfini lived in Bruges. 2) The dog in the foreground 3) Van Eyck is one of the authors of the Book of Hours.
82	"une orange" (p. 487)	On Isabelle Gratiolet's table.	
96	"Au pied du lit il y a des mules à semelles de bois". (p. 574)	Beside Dinteville's bed.	
98	"un grand miroir de 78 centimètres". (p. 595)	In the Réols' bedroom.	Also a quotation from a furniture catalogue (not included in the ts.)
99	"Un tout petit portrait en pied d'un homme de la Renaissance, au visage en lame de couteau, portant un chapeau à larges bords et un long manteau de fourrure". (p. 598)	Painting at Bartlebooth's.	

Chapter	Allusion	Context	Sources/remarks
9	"Joseph Nieto" ("un des adultes du tableau")	Name of a character.	
13	"un peintre, debout devant un grand chevalet, cambrant la taille, renversant légèrement la tête en arrière; il a des longues moustaches effilées et des cheveux qui tombent en boucles sur ses épaules. Il est vêtu d'un ample pourpoint et tient dans une main sa palette, dans l'autre un long pinceau." (p. 69)	Statue at Rorschash's.	
23	"huit panneau de bois sculpté [...] qui proviennent, paraît-il, du palais du Prado". (p. 134)	In Madame Moreau's apartment (designed by Fleury).	
28	"la lente accoutumance du corps à l'espace, toute cette somme d'événements minuscules, inexistants, irracontables - [...] placer entre deux portes un haut miroir rectangulaire [...]" (p. 169)	Valène's memory.	
33	Programmed <u>faux</u>		Replaced by "Saint Jerome"
35	"un groupe de nains faisant diverses cabrioles autour de leur reine, une naine à faciès canin, vêtue d'une robe à paniers" (p. 215)	On embroidery hung in the Concierge's front room.	
40	"l'archipel Margarita-Teresa" (p. 234)	Possible site for Tour Breidel.	
45	Programmed <u>faux</u>		Replaced by "The Ambassadors"
70	"la silhouette sombre d'un homme en cape montant trois marches menant à une jetée, à demi retourné dans la direction du peintre". (p. 418)	Puzzle-solving	
84	"le nain Nicholas Pertusano"	Character.	

Fig. 41 Antonello da Messina, "Saint Jerome in his Study" (c. 1460) London, National Gallery.

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Fig. 42 Lubin Baugin, "Nature morte à l'échiquier" (c. 1630)
Paris, Musée du Louvre.

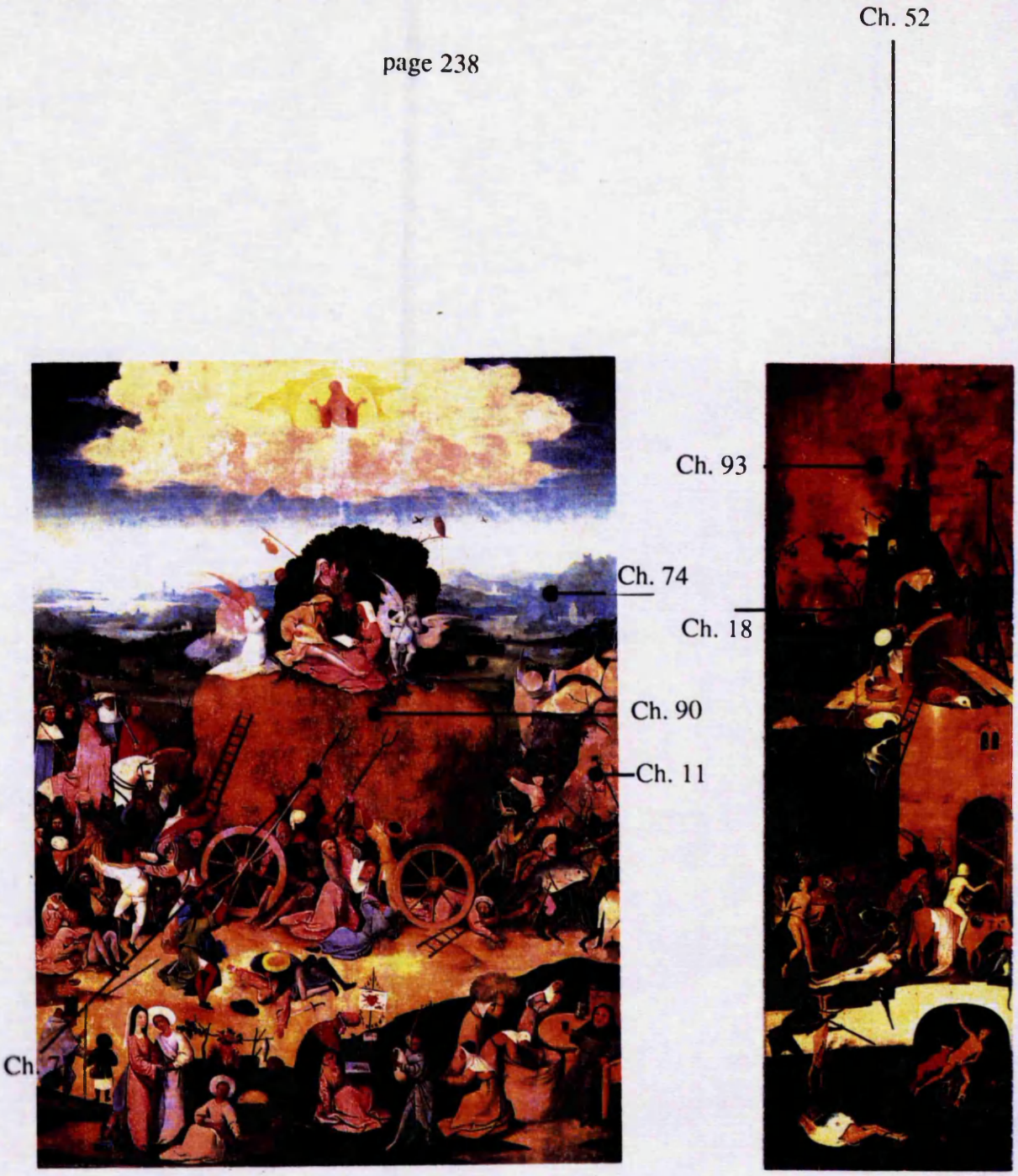

Fig. 43 Hieronimus Bosch, "The Hay Wagon (c. 1505)
Madrid, Prado Museum

Fig. 44 Hieronimus Bosch, "The Hay Wagon" (c. 1505)
Closed triptych.

Fig. 45 Hieronimus Bosch, "Epiphany". Madrid, Prado Museum. Replaces "The Hay Wagon" in Chapter 88.

Fig. 46 Peter Breughel, "The Fall of Icarus" (c. 1560)
Bruxelles, Musées Royaux.

Fig. 47 Vittore Carpaccio, "The Dream of Saint Ursula" (1495)
Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia.

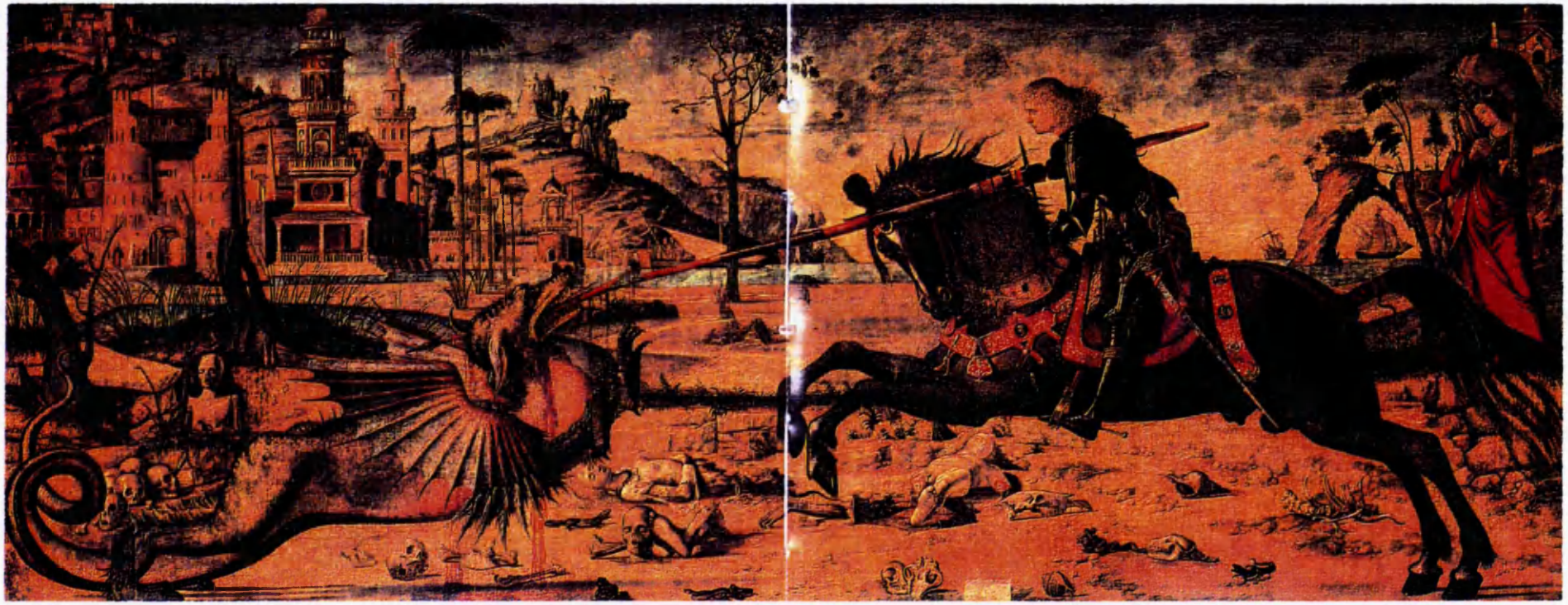

Fig. 48 Vittore Carpaccio, "Saint Georges Slaying the Dragon"
Venice, Scuola San Giorgio degli Schiavoni.
Replaces "The Dream of Saint Ursula"in Chapter 22.

Fig. 49 Giorgione, "The Tempest" (c. 1508)
Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia.

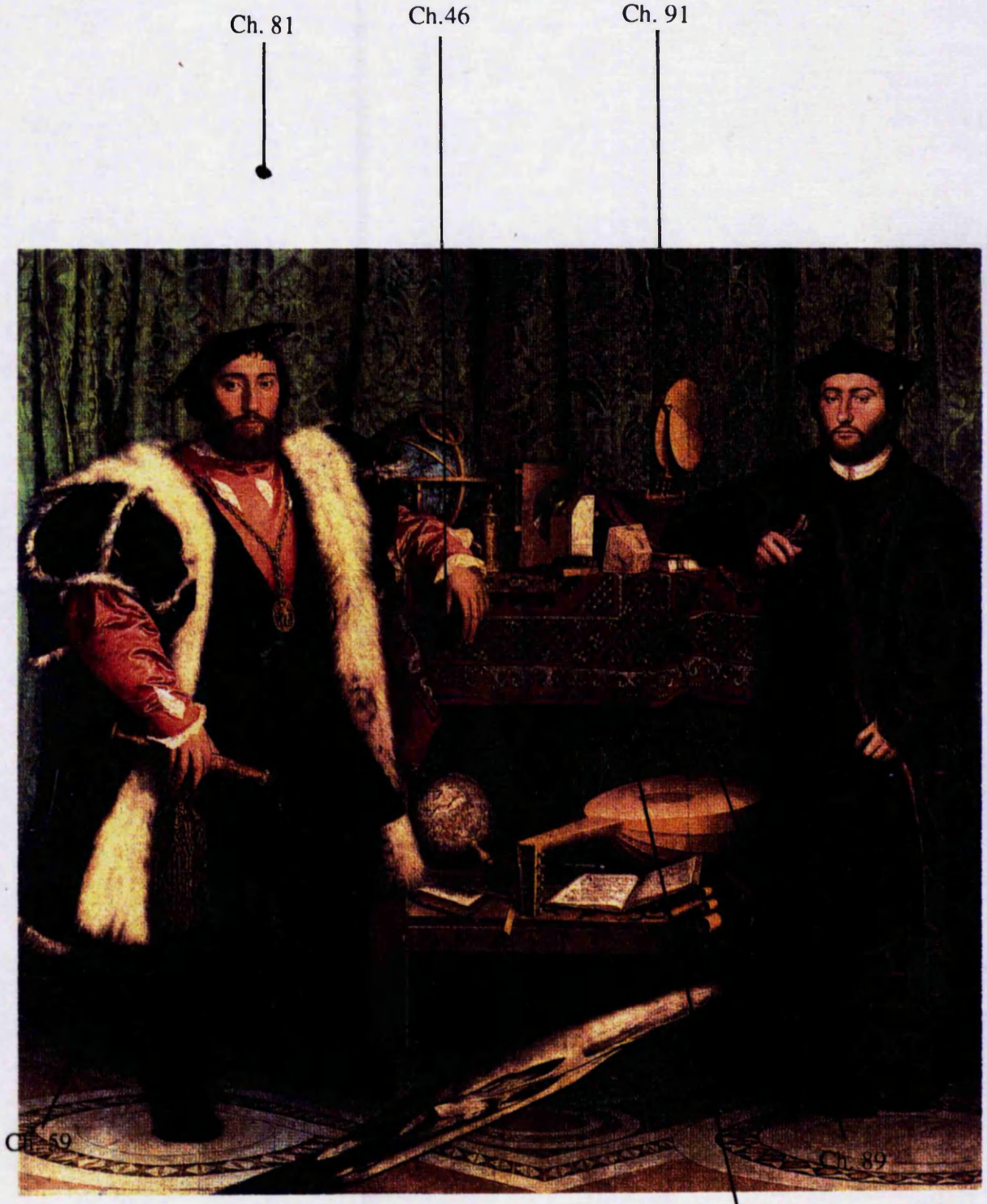

Fig. 50 Hans Holbein, "The Ambassadors" (1533)
London, National Gallery.

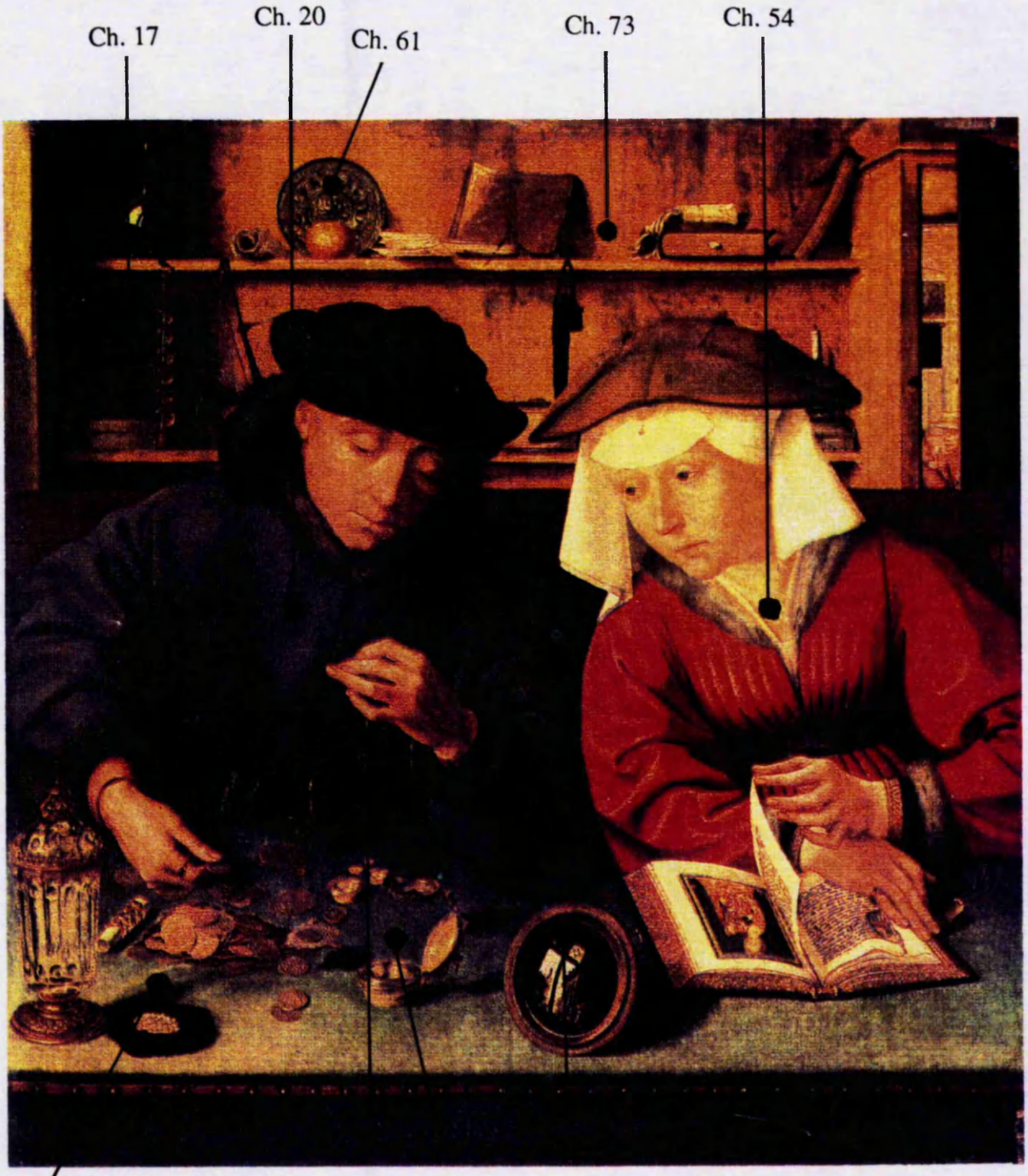

Fig. 51 Quentin Metsys, "The Banker and his Wife" (1514)
Paris, Musée du Louvre.

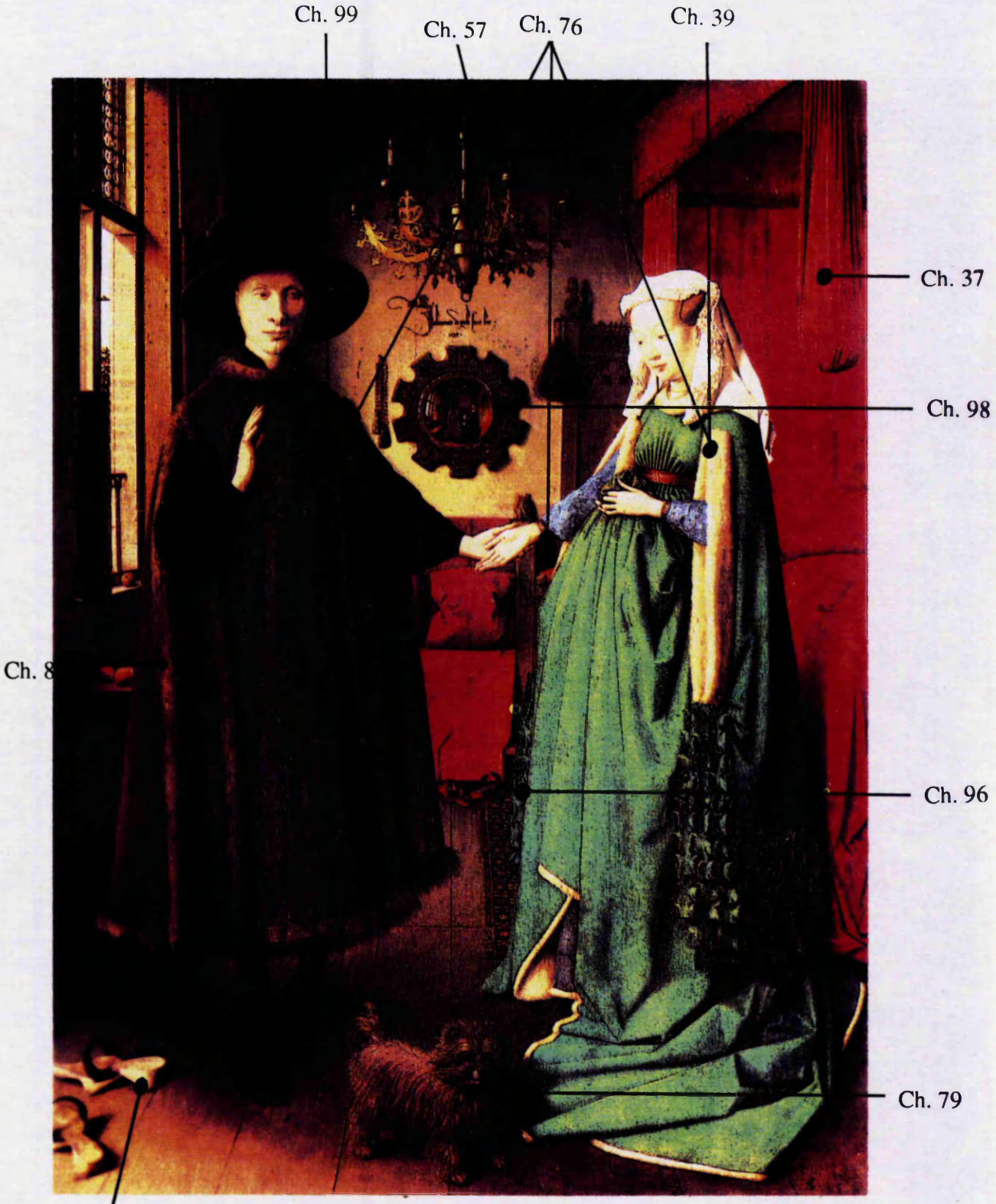

Fig. 52 Jan van Eyck, "The Marriage of the Arnolfini" (1434) London, National Gallery.

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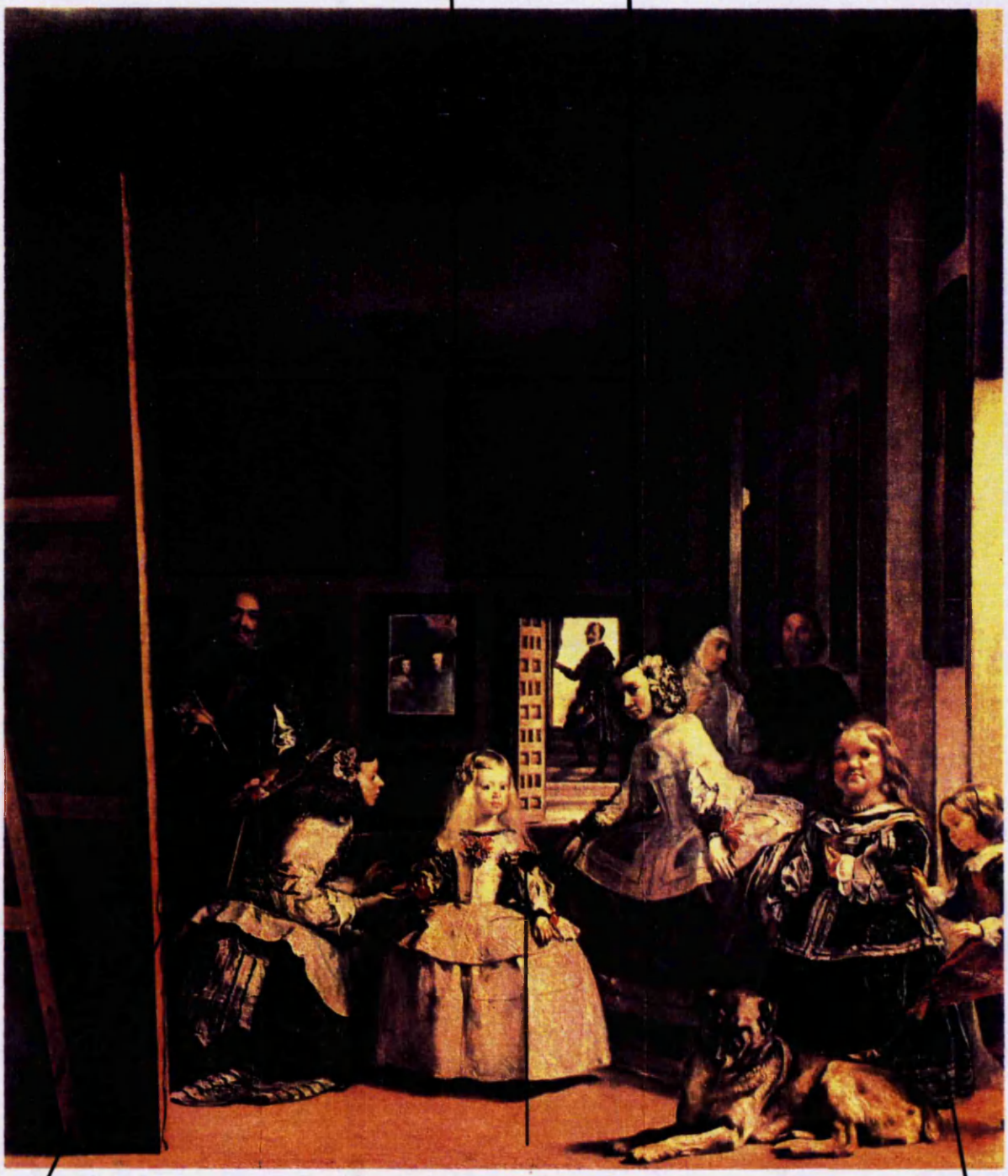

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Fig. 53 Diego Velasquez, "The Meninas" (1656)
Madrid, Prado Museum.

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Appendix 2

Catalogue of Paintings and art works in Vme

This catalogue lists all the paintings explicitly or implicitly mentioned in Vme, whether they be existing or fictional, and whether they be actual paintings, or reproductions on different iconic objects. For example, Paul Cézanne's "Joueur des cartes" is included here because the painting is mentioned as the image is reproduced on a cigarette case. On the other hand, the embroidery on page 215, like many other images (embroideries, posters, etc.), is not included because it does not constitute a recognisable "art work". It is assumed that a painting is fictional when its description is a quotation or an allusion to another author.

The catalogue follows the chapter numbers of Vme (given in bold on the left hand side). Where the paintings are by a known artist and where a title is attributed, the reader can check in which chapter they occurr by consulting the two checklists at the end of the catalogue. Illustrations are gathered together in the section entitled "The Artist's Studio" (pp. 300-340 below) and cross-referenced in the catalogue (in bold, beside the painting's title)

Each entry gives the chapter number (followed by a letter of the alphabet when there is more than one painting in the chapter), and, as far as possible, details about the artist (name, dates, style), details about the painting (date, technique, location), the form under which it is presented in Vme (postcard, blotter, reproduction, etc.), and where else it is mentioned by Perec. Titles have been left in French when they refer to the title attributed in the text. For untitled paintings an indication of the subject represented on canvas is given in English. The last section of each entry reproduces the passage of Vme in which the painting is mentioned. References to the text are given after the passage. Quotations and allusions are marked in italic in the text.

The following abbreviations are also used:

(R) beside the artist's or the title's name means that these are real

(F) beside the artist's or the title's name means that these are fictional

Where neither (R) nor (F) appear beside the artist or the title it means that there is no evidence of the artist's or of the painting's existence, nor definite proof of their non-existence.

(A) followed by a name or a title beside the artist's or the title's name means that these are allusions to that author or work. In the passage from Vme they refer to the word/sentence in italic preceding this key. Full references are given by Pawlikowska, 1986.

(Q) followed by a name or a title beside the artist's or the title's name means that these are quotations from that author or work. In the passage from Vme they refer to the word/sentence in italic preceding this key. Full references are given by Pawikowska, 1986.

This catalogue does not include paintings which are allusions to the ten paintings of the Paintings List, since these may be found in Appendix 1. Implicit paintings are included only when there is a clue in the text (i.e. the Van Gogh's painting in chapter XLV) or when other works by Perec make their identity unmistakable (cross-references in UCDA or other books). It could have included many more paintings that come to mind when reading Vme, some of which were perhaps also in Perec's mind when he wrote the text; this catalogue stops short of merely speculative associations.

1 WINCKLER, Marguerite. (F). French miniaturist, 1911-1943.
Untitled : Lost Ambitions (F). *
Retouched photograph.

*See also ch. 53.

"[...] ce tableau carré qu'il aimait tant: il représentait une antichambre dans laquelle se tenaient trois hommes. *Deux étaient debout, en redingote, pâles et gras, et surmontés de hauts-de-forme qui semblaient vissés sur leur crâne. Le troisième, vêtu de noir lui aussi, était assis près de la porte dans l'attitude d'un monsieur qui attend quelqu'un et s'occupait à enfiler des gants neufs dont les doigts se moulaient sur les siens.*" [Q: Kafka, Le Procès]

p. 22

4 (a) ANON.
Untitled: Still life with lighted havana.
Modern vanitas (A: Baugin, "Nature morte").
Painting.

"Le premier [tableau] est une nature morte qui, malgré sa facture moderne, évoque assez bien *ces compositions ordonnées autour du thème des cinq sens, si répandues dans toute l'Europe de la Renaissance à la fin du XVIIIe siècle* [A: Baugin, "Nature morte"]: sur une table sont disposés un cendrier dans lequel fume un havane, un livre dont on peut lire le titre et le sous-titre - *La Symphonie inachevée,* roman - mais dont le nom de l'auteur reste caché, une bouteille de rhum, un bilboquet et, dans une coupe, un amoncellement de fruit sechés, noix, amandes, oreillons d'abricots, pruneaux, etc."

p. 32

4 (b) ANON.
Untitled: Street on the edge of a city (F).
Painting.

"Le second [tableau] représente *une rue de banlieue, la nuit, entre des terrains vagues. A droite, un pylône métallique dont les traverses portent sur chacun de leurs points d'intersection une grosse lampe électrique allumée. A gauche, une constellation reproduit, renversée (base au ciel et pointe vers la terre), la forme exacte du pylône. Le ciel est couvert de floraisons (bleu foncé sur fond plus clair) identiques à celles du givre sur une vitre.* [Q: Leiris, Nuit sans nuit]".

p. 32

4 (c) ANON
Untitled: Tarand. (F). (Q: Rabelais, Le Quart Livre).
Painting.

"Le troisième [tableau] représente un animal fabuleux, le tarande, dont la première description fut donnée par Gélon le Sarmate [...]" [follows Q: Rabelais, Le Quart Livre)]

p. 33

4 (d) FORBES, Stanhope Alexander. English painter
Un Rat derrière la tenture. (A: Hamlet).
Black/white reproduction.

BONNAT, Léon. (R). French painter, 1832-1922

"Le quatrième [tableau] est la reproduction en noir et blanc d'un tableau de Forbes intitulé *Un rat derrière la tenture* [A: Hamlet]. Ce tableau s'inspire d'une histoire réelle qui arriva à Newcastle-upon-Tyne au cours de l'hiver 1858. [...]
Forbes, dont c'est une oeuvre de jeunesse encore mal dégagée de l'influence de Bonnat, s'est inspiré très librement de ce fait divers. Il nous montre la pièce aux murs couverts de montres. Le vieux cocher est vêtu d'un uniforme de cuir blanc; il est monté sur une chaise chinoise laquée de rouge sombre, aux formes conturnées. Il accroche à une poutre du plafond une longue écharpe de soie. La vieille Lady Forthright se tient dans l'embrasure de la porte; elle regarde son domestique avec un air d'extrême colère; dans sa main droite elle tient, à bout de bras, la chaînette d'argent au bout de laquelle pend un fragment de l'oeuf d'albâtre."

pp. 33-35

6 (a) ANON.
Qui boit en mangeant sa soupe quand il est mort il n'y voit goutte. (F). (Q: Rabelais, Livre II).
Engraving.

6 (b) BOSCH, Hieronimus. (R). Dutch painter, c. 1450/1460-1516.
L'Escamoteur. (R). c. 1480 **Fig. 54**
Oil on wood. 53x65 cm.
Musée municipal de Sain-Germain-en-Laye (France).

"La quatrième [fille] regarde avec un air de profonde indifférence une gravure qui représente un évêque penché au-dessus d'une table sur laquelle est posé un de ces jeux appelé *solitaire*. [...] La gravure qui imite manifestement le célèbre tableau de Bosch intitulé *L'Escamoteur*, conservé au Musée municipal de Saint-Germain-en-Laye, porte un titre plaisant - bien qu'apparemment peu explicatif - calligraphié en lettres gothiques [...]"

p. 39

7 BELLMER, Hans. (R). German painter, 1902-1975.
Untitled.
Recto-verso drawing.

"[...] cet expert [Guyomard] qui s'était rendu célèbre en déposant des fresques couvertes de plusieurs couches de plâtre et de peinture, et en coupant en deux, dans le sens de l'épaisseur, une feuille de papier sur laquelle Hans Bellmer avait dessiné recto verso." pp. 44-45

8 SILVESTRE, Israël. (R). French draftsman and engraver, 1621-91.
Le Grand Défilé de la Fête du Carrousel. (R).* **Fig. 55**
Bibliothèque Nationale.
Reproduction.

* Also in LC, 10

"Tout est parti, aujourd'hui, évidemment: [...] les trois reproductions encadrées. Valène ne se souvient avec précision que de l'une d'entre elles: elle représentait *Le Grand Défilé de la Fête du Carrousel,* Winckler l'avait trouvée dans un numéro de Noël de *L'Illustration*; des années plus tard, il y a seulement quelques mois en fait, Valène apprit, en feuilletant le *Petit Robert*, qu'elle était d'Israël Silvestre."

pp. 48-49

9 ANON.
Arminius et Sigimer. (F). (Q: Verne).
Reproduction

BENNET, L. (R). French illustrator.
Illustration of Verne, Les 500 millions de la Bégum, Ed. Hetzel, Ldp, 1966, p. 127.
Fig. 56

"Au-dessus du lit, est épinglée une reproduction intitulée *Arminius et Sigimer*: elle représente *deux colosses en casaque grise, au cou de taureau, aux biceps herculéens, aux faces rouges embroussaillées de moustaches épaisses et de favoris buissonnants* [Q: Verne, Les 500 millions de la Bégum]."

p. 58

10 VERMEER, Jan. (R). Dutch painter*, 1632-1675.
Girl reading. (R) * c. 1659. **Fig. 57**
Oil on canvas. 33x64,5 cm.
Staadliche Gemälde galerie, Dresden.

* The painting that corresponds to this chapter in UCDA is "Jeune fille lisant une lettre" by an artist of the Dutch School (UCDA, 75 and 109)

"La jeune fille est debout près de la fenêtre. Le visage illuminé de joie, elle lit - ou peut-être même relit pour la vingtième fois - une lettre, tout en grignotant un quignon de pain."

p. 59

11 (a) HUTTING, Franz. (F). French-American contemporary painter.
Untitled: "hazy" copies of around 20 paintings, amongst which the 5 entries below.

11 (b) VINCI, Leonardo da. (R). Italian artist, 1452-1519.
La Joconde. (R). 1503-1506. **Fig. 58**
Oil on wood. 77x53 cm.
Musée du Louvre.

11 (c) MILLET, François. (R). French landscape artist, 1815-1875.
L'Angélus. (R). 1857-59. **Fig. 59**
Oil on canvas. 55x66 cm.
Musée d'Orsay.

11 (d) MEISSONIER, Ernest. (R). French genre artist, 1815-1891.
La Retraite de Russie. (R) 1814. **Fig. 60**
Oil on wood. 51x76 cm.
Musée d'Orsay.

11 (e) MANET, Edouard. (R). French impressionist painter, 1832-1883
Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe. (R). 1863. **Fig. 61**
Oil on canvas. 208x264 cm.
Musée d'Orsay.

11 (f) REMBRANDT (H.Van Ryn, known as). (R). Dutch painter and engraver, 1606-69.
La Leçon d'Anatomie. (R). 1632. **Fig. 62**
Oil on canvas. 162,5x216,5 cm.
Maritshuis, The Hague.

"Sur un rail fixé à peu près à deux mètres cinquante du sol, coulissent plusieurs tringles métalliques sur lesquelles le peintre a accroché une vingtaine de ses toiles, la plupart de petits formats: elles appartiennent presque toutes à une ancienne manière de l'artiste, celle qu'il appelle lui-même sa *«période brouillard»* et avec laquelle il conquit la notoriété: il s'agit généralement de copies finement exécutées de tableaux réputés - *La Joconde, L'Angélus, La Retraite de Russie, Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe, La Leçon d'Anatomie,* etc. - sur lesquelles il a ensuite peint des effets plus ou moins prononcés de brume, aboutissant à une grisaille imprécise dont émergent à peine les silhouettes de ses prestigieux modèles."

p. 63

11 (g) MALEVICH, Kasimir. (R). Russian painter, 1878-1935.
Carré blanc sur fond blanc. (R). 1913. **Fig. 63**
Oil on canvas. 78,7x78,7 cm.
Museum of Modern Art, New York.

"Deux ou trois critiques se gaussèrent, dont le Suisse Beyssandre qui écrivit: «Ce n'est pas au *Carré blanc sur fond blanc* de Malevich que les gris de Hutting font penser mais plutôt au combat de nègres dans un tunnel cher à Pierre Dac et au général Vermot»."

p. 64

11 (h) HUTTING, Franz. (F). French-American contemporary painter.
Untitled copies of the 2 entries below.

11 (i) INGRES, Jean-Auguste Dominique. (R). French painter, 1780-1867.
Le Bain turc. (R). 1862. **Fig. 64**
Oil on canvas mounted on wood. Diam: 108 cm.
Musée du Louvre.

11 (j) TURNER, Joseph M. William. (R). English watercolour artist, 1775-51.
Harbour near Tintagel. (F).

11 (k) BARTLEBOOTH, Percival. (F). English Watercolour artist, 1900-75.
Copy of Turner's Harbour near Tintagel (F). > 1936 < 1945.
Watercolour.

"L'homme et la femme [chez Hutting] sont des clients autrichiens. Ils sont venus exprès de Salzbourg pour négocier l'achat d'un des plus cotés *brouillards* de Hutting, celui dont l'oeuvre de départ ne fut rien moins que *Le Bain turc,* pourvu par le traitement que le Hutting lui a fait subir d'une surabondance de vapeur. De loin, l'oeuvre ressemble curieusement à une aquarelle de Turner, *Harbour near Tintagel,* qu'à plusieurs reprises, à l'époque où il lui donnait des leçons, Valène montra à Bartlebooth comme l'exemple le plus accompli de ce qu'on peut faire en aquarelle, et dont l'Anglais alla faire sur place, en Cornouailles, une exacte copie."

pp. 64-65

13 ANON.
Untitled: Portrait of Rémi Rorschash.
Pen drawing.

"Sur le mur du fond, un grand dessin à la plume représente Rémi Rorschash lui-même. C'est un vieillard de grande taille, sec, à tête d'oiseau."

p. 69

14 VASARELY, Victor. (R). French painter of Hungarian origin, b. 1908.
Reproduction.

"un petit divan [...] surmonté d'une grande reproduction de Vasarely [...]"

p. 77

15 ANON.
Laborynthus. (F).
Engraving.

"Le troisième objet est une grande gravure, une sorte d'image d'Epinal. Smautf l'a trouvée à Bergen, la dernière année de leurs pérégrinations. Elle représente un jeune enfant recevant d'un vieux magister un livre de prix. Le jeune enfant a sept ou huit ans, il est vêtu d'une veste de drap bleu ciel, porte des culottes courtes et des escarpins vernis; son front est ceint d'une couronne de lauriers; il grimpe les trois marches d'une estrade parquetée décorée de plantes grasses. Le vieillard est en toge. Il a une longue barbe grise et des lunettes à monture d'acier. Il tient dans la main droite une règle de buis et dans la main gauche un grand folio relié en rouge sur lequel on lit *Erindringer fra en Reise i Skotland* (c'est, apprit Smautf, la relation du voyage que le pasteur danois Plenge fit en Ecosse pendant l'été de 1859). Près du maître d'école se trouve une table recouverte d'un drap vert sur laquelle sont posés d'autres volumes, une mappemonde, et une *partition de musique, d'un format à l'italienne* [A: Baugin, "Nature morte"], ouverte. Une étroite plaque de cuivre gravée, fixée sur le cadre de bois de la gravure, en donne le titre, apparemment sans rapport avec la scène représentée: *Laborynthus.*"

p. 85

18 OWEN, U.N. English painter (F) (A: Christie, And then there were none)*
Rake's Progress.
Watercolour.

* Pun on U.N. Known

"Sur le mur du fond [...] une grande aquarelle, intitulée *Rake's Progress* et signée U. N. Owen, représente une petite station de chemin de fer, en pleine campagne. A gauche, l'employé de la gare se tient debout, appuyé à un haut pupitre faisant fonction de guichet. C'est un homme d'une cinquantaine d'années, aux tempes dégarnies, au visage rond, aux moustaches abondantes. Il est en gilet. Il feint de consulter un indicateur horaire alors qu'il achève en fait de recopier sur un petit rectangle de papier une recette de *mint-cake* prise dans un almanach à demi dissimulé sous l'indicateur. Devant lui, de l'autre côté du pupitre, un client au nez chaussé de lorgnons et dont le visage exprime une prodigeuse exaspération attend son billet en se limant les ongles. A droite, un troisième personnage, en bras de chemise avec des larges bretelles à fleurs, sort de la gare en roulant devant lui une grosse barrique. Tout autour de la gare s'étendent des champs de luzerne où des vaches sont en train de paître."

p. 92

21 LE MERIADECH', Richard. Breton painter of landscapes and animal subjects.
4 landscape paintings.

"[La] fortune [de Juste Gratiolet] se composait [...] et de quatre grandes toiles du paysagiste et animalier breton Le Meriadech' qui était alors extrêmement prisé."

pp. 108-09

23 DE NEUVILLE. (R). French illustrator.
Illustration of J.Verne, Vingt mille lieues sous les mers, Ed. Hetzel, Ldp, 1966, p. 106.

Fig. 65

"La pièce où nous nous trouvons maintenant - *un fumoir bibliothèque* - est assez représentative de son travail. C'était à l'origine une pièce rectangulaire d'environ six mètres sur quatre. Fleury a commencé par en faire une pièce ovale sur les murs de laquelle il a disposé huit panneaux de bois sculpté, de coloris sombre, qu'il est allé chercher en Espagne, et qui proviennent, paraît-il, du *palais du Prado* [A: Velasquez, "Meninas"]. Entre ces boiseries, il a installé *de hauts meubles en palissandre noir incrustés de cuivre, supportant sur leurs larges rayons un grand nombre de livres uniformément reliés* [Q: Verne, Vingt mille lieues sous les mers] en cuir havane, des livres d'art pour la plupart, rangés par ordre alphabétique. *De vastes divans, capitonnés de cuir marron* [Q: Verne, Vingt mille lieues sous les mers], sont disposés sous ces bibliothèques et en suivent exactement les courbures. Entre ces divans sont placés de fragiles guéridons en bois d'amarante tandis qu'au centre se dresse une lourde table à quatre-feuilles et à piétement central, couverte des journaux et des revues."

p.134

24 (a) Attributed to KOREFUSA, Fujiwara. Japanese painter.
GENJI MONOGATARI EMAKI. (R) 12th Century *. **Fig. 66**
Japanese scroll.
Reimeikai Foundation, Tokyo.

* Also in PTG, 13 and Eses, 58

"[...] un plan de travail [...] sur lequel est posé, en partie déroulé, un *emaki* (rouleau peint) représentant une scène célèbre de la littérature japonaise: le Prince Genji s'est introduit dans le palais du gouverneur Yo No Kami et, caché derrière une tenture, regarde l'épouse de celui-ci, la belle Utsusemi, dont il est éperdument amoureux, en train de jouer au go avec son amie Nokiba No Ogi."

p.139

24 (b) ANON.
L'Ambition .*

*Possible allusion to Flaubert, L'Education Sentimentale and to LC.

24 (c) ANON.
A Day at the Races.*

*Possible allusion to the homonymous film by the Marx Brothers (1936) and to the engraving of "Thunderbird, vainqueur à Epsom" (LC, 9).

24 (d) ANON.
La Première Ascension du Mont-Cervin.*

* Attributed in UCDA (p. 59) to Gustave Feuerstahl (Flaubert).

"Les murs sont presque entièrement couverts de tableaux, de gravures et de reproductions diverses. La plupart, dans la pénombre de la pièce, n'offrent au regard qu'une grisaille imprécise dont se détachent parfois une signature - Pellerin -, un titre gravé sur une plaque au bas du cadre - *L'Ambition, A Day at the Races, La Première Ascension du Mont-Cervin* - ou un détail: un paysan chinois tirant une carriole, un jouvenceau à genoux adoubé par son suzerain. Cinq tableaux seulement autorisent une description plus précise [...]"

p. 140

24 (e) PELLERIN.(F). (A: Flaubert, Education Sentimentale)
La Venitienne. (F). (Q: Flaubert, Education Sentimentale).
Painting.

Le premier [tableau] est un portrait de femme intitulé *La Venitienne. Elle a une robe de velours ponceau avec une ceinture d'orfèvrerie, et sa large manche doublée d'hermine laisse voir son bras nu qui touche à la balustrade d'un escalier montant derrière elle. A sa gauche, une grande colonne va jusqu'au haut de la toile rejoindre des architectures, décrivant un arc. On aperçoit en dessous, vaguement, des massifs d'orangers presque noirs où se découpe un ciel bleu rayé de nuages blancs. Sur le balustre couvert d'un tapis il y a, dans un plat d'argent, un bouquet de fleurs, un chapelet d'ambre, un poignard et un coffret de vieil ivoire un peu jaune dégorgeant des sequins d'or; quelques-uns même, tombés par terre çà et là forment une suite d'éclaboussures brillantes, de manière à conduire l'oeil vers la pointe de son pied, car elle est posée sur l'avant-dernière marche, dans un mouvement naturel et en pleine lumière.* [Q: Flaubert, L'Education sentimentale]"

pp. 140-41

24 (f) ANON.
Les Domestiques.
Pornographic engraving.

"Le second [tableau] est une gravure libertine portant pour titre *Les Domestiques :* un garçon d'une quinzaine d'années, portant un bonnet de marmiton, le pantalon aux chevilles, s'arcboutant contre une lourde table de cuisine, est sodomisé par un cuisinier obèse; couché sur un banc devant la table, un valet en livrée a déboutonné sa braguette, faisant apparaître un sexe en pleine érection, cependant qu'une soubrette, relevant de ses deux mains ses jupes et son tablier, s'installe à califourchon sur lui. Assis à l'autre bout de la table en face d'une copieuse platée de macaronis, un cinquième personnage, un vieillard tout de noir vêtu, assiste, manifestement indifférent, à la scène."

p. 141

24 (g) ANON.
Untitled: Pastoral scene. (F).
Painting.

"Le troisième [tableau] est une scène champêtre: *une prairie rectangulaire, en pente, d'herbe verte et épaisse, avec une quantité de fleurs jaunes (apparemment de vulgaires pissenlits). Au haut de la prairie il y a un chalet devant la porte duquel se tiennent deux femmes très occupées à bavarder, une paysanne coiffée d'un foulard et une bonne d'enfants. Trois enfants jouent dans l'herbe, deux petits garçons et une petite fille qui cueillent les fleurs jaunes et en font des bouquets.* [Q: Mannoni, Freud]"

p. 141

24 (h) BLANCHARD, Jacques-Emile.
Quand les Poules auront des dents.
Caricature.

"Le quatrième [tableau] est une caricature signée Blanchard et intitulée *Quand les Poules auront des dents.* Elle représente le général Boulanger et le député Charles Floquet en train de se serrer la main."

p. 141

24 (i) ANON.
Le Mouchoir.
Watercolour.

"Le cinquième [tableau] enfin est une aquarelle ayant pour titre *Le Mouchoir,* et illustrant une scène classique de la vie parisienne: rue de Rivoli, une jeune élégante laisse tomber son mouchoir et un homme en frac - fines moustaches, monocle, souliers vernis, oeillet à la boutonnière, etc. - se précipite pour le ramasser."

p. 142

26 ANON.
Untitled: Pisanello giving four medals to Lionel d'Este.
Reproduction on a postcard.

"[...] une reproduction d'un dessin représentant Pisanello offrant sur un écrin à Lionel d'Este quatre médailles d'or [...]"

p. 152

27 VALENE, Serge. (F). French painter, 1900-1975.
Untitled: Portrait of the Grifalconis. (F).
Pen and ink drawing.

"Ce sera quelque chose comme un souvenir pétrifié, comme un de ces tableaux de Magritte où l'on ne sait pas très bien si c'est la pierre qui est devenue vivante ou si c'est la vie qui s'est momifiée, quelque chose comme une image fixée une fois pour toutes, indélébile: cet homme assis, la moustache tombante, les bras croisés sur la table, son cou de taureau jaillissant d'une chemise sans col, et cette femme, près de lui, les cheveux tirés, avec sa jupe noire, et son corsage à fleurs, debout derrière lui, le bras gauche posé sur son épaule, et les deux jumeaux, debout devant la table, se tenant par la main, avec leur costume marin à culottes courtes, leur brassard de premier communiant, leurs chaussettes leur tombant sur les chevilles, et la table, avec sa nappe en toile cirée, avec la cafétière d'émail bleu et la photo du grand-père dans son cadre ovale, et la cheminée avec, entre les deux pots à pieds coniques, décorés de chevrons noirs et blancs, plantés de touffes bleuâtres de romarin, la couronne de mariée sous son oblongue cloche de verre, avec ses fausses fleurs d'oranger - gouttes de coton roulé trempées dans la cire -, son support perlé, ses décors de guirlandes, d'oiseaux et de

miroirs." [...] [Grifalconi] voulait que le peintre le représente, lui, avec sa femme et les deux jumeaux. Ils seraient tous les quatre dans leur salle à manger. Lui serait assis; elle aurait sa jupe noire et son corsage à fleurs, elle serait debout derrière lui, sa main gauche posée sur son épaule gauche à lui dans un geste plein de confiance et de sérénité, les deux jumeaux auraient leur beau costume de marin et leur brassard de premier communiant et il y aurait sur la table la photo de son grand-père qui visita les Pyramides et sur la cheminée la couronne de mariée de Laetizia et les deux pots de romarin qu'elle aimait tant.
Valène ne fit pas un tableau mais un dessin à la plume avec des encres de couleur. Faisant poser Emilio et les jumeaux, se servant pour Laetizia de quelques photos déjà anciennes, il fignola soigneusement les détails demandés par l'ébéniste: les petits fleurs mauves et bleues du corsage de Laetizia, le casque colonial et les guêtres de l'ancêtre, les ors fastidieux de la couronne de mariée, les plis damassés des brassards des jumeaux."

pp.159-62

28 ANON.
Untitled: Trompe l'oeil.

"[...] la cage de l'escalier avec ses peintures en trompe-l'oeil imitant de vieilles marbrures et ses plinthes de staff à effets de boiseries."

p. 166

29 (a) ANON.
Untitled: Book case.
Trompe l'oeil.

"Tout le mur du fond est occupé par un bibliothèque de style Regency dont la partie centrale est en réalité une porte peinte en trompe-l'oeil."

p. 173

29 (b) THORWALDSSON. (F). Norwegian painter.
Untitled: Norwegian groom. (F).
Pen drawing. False attribution for:

ROUX, G. French illustrator.
Illustration of Jules Verne, Un billet de loterie, Edition Hetzel, Ldp, undated, p. 57. *

Fig. 67

* See also the painting entitled "Laboureurs en Norvège" attributed, in UCDA (p. 59), to the Danish artist Dolknif Schlamperer.

"[...] un dessin à la plume de Thorwaldsson représentant *un Norvégien dans son costume de mariage: jaquette courte à boutons d'argent très rapprochés, chemise*

empesée à corolle droite, gilet à liséré soutaché de soie, culotte étroite rattachée au genou avec des bouquets de floches laineuses, feutre mou, bottes jaunâtres, et, à la ceinture, dans sa gaine de cuir, le couteau scandinave, le Dolknif, dont est toujours muni le vrai Norvégien [Q: Verne, Un Billet de loterie] [...]"

p. 175

29 (c) FALSTEN, William. American caricaturist, 1873-1907.
<u>The Punishment</u>.
Caricature.

"[...] un autre dessin, d'un certain William Falsten, caricaturiste américain du début du siècle, intitulé *The Punishment* (le Châtiment) représentant un petit garçon couché dans son lit, pensant au merveilleux gâteau que sa famille est en train de se partager - vision matérialisée dans un nuage flottant au-dessus de sa tête - et dont à la suite d'une bêtise quelconque il a été privé [...]"

p. 175

31 STRASBOURG SCHOOL.
Untitled: <u>vanitas</u> (A: Baugin, "Nature morte").
Reproduction in a book.

"Un livre d'art de grand format, intitulé *Ars Vanitatis*, est ouvert sur ses genoux, montrant une reproduction en pleine page d'une de ces célèbres *Vanités* [A: Baugin, "Nature morte"] de l'Ecole strasbourgeoise: un crâne entouré d'attributs se rapportant aux cinq sens, ici fort peu canoniques par rapport aux modèles habituels, mais parfaitement reconnaissables: le gôut est représenté, non par une oie grasse ou un lièvre fraîchement tués, mais par un jambon pendu à une solive, et par une délicate tisanière de faïence blanche remplaçant le classique verre de vin; le toucher par des dès et par une pyramide d'albâtre surmontée d'un bouchon de cristal taillé comme un diamant; l'audition par une petite trompette à trous - et non à pistons - telle qu'on en utilisait pour les musiques de fanfares; la vue, qui est en même temps, selon la symbolique même de ces tableaux, perception du temps inexorable, est figurée par le crâne lui-même et, s'opposant dramatiquement à lui, par une de ces pendules ouvragées appelées cartels; l'odorat enfin, n'est pas évoqué par les traditionnels bouquets de roses ou d'oeillets, mais par une plante grasse, une sorte d'anthure naine dont les inflorescences biannuelles dégagent un fort parfum de myrrhe."

p. 181

32 (a) SILBERSELBER. American painter.
Jardin japonais, IV.
Watercolour.
Reproduction on invitation card.

"A côté d'elle [Mme Marcia], une table basse est surchargée de papiers, de livres et d'objets divers: [...] une invitation au vernissage d'une exposition du peintre Silberselber: l'oeuvre reproduite sur le carton est une aquarelle intitulée *Jardin japonais, IV,* dont le tiers inférieur est occupé par une serie de lignes brisées strictement parallèles et les deux tiers supérieurs par *une représentation réaliste d'un ciel lourd avec effets d'orage* [A: Giorgione, "Tempest"]".

p. 199

32 (b) WATTEAU, Jean-Antoine. (R). French painter, 1684-1721.
L'Indifférent. (R). 1717. **Fig. 68**
Oil on canvas. 25x19 cm.
Musée du Louvre.
Statue reproducing Watteau's painting.

"[...] une petite figurine d'albâtre reproduisant *L'Indifférent* de Watteau [...]"

p. 199

32 (c) ANON. Alsatian painter. (F). 17th century.
2 Landscape paintings.

"[...] *deux vitrines emplies de tissu copte et de papyrus au-dessus desquelles deux grands paysages sombres d'un peintre alsacien du XVIIe siècle avec des traces de villes et d'incendies dans le lointain, encadrent en place d'honneur* [Q: Butor, Passage de Milan] une plaque couverte de hiéroglyphes [...]"

p. 200

32 (d) BOTTICELLI, Sandro. (R). Italian painter, c. 1445-1510.
The Birth of Venus. (R). c. 1480. **Fig. 69**
Tempera on canvas. 184,5x285,5.
Uffizi, Florence.

"[...] un lit extravagant, enfin, fantaisie moscovite réputée avoir été proposée à Napoléon Ier lorsqu'il passa la nuit au palais Petrovski, mais auquel il préféra certainement son habituel lit de camp: c'est un meuble imposant, entièrement marqueté, dont les seize espèces de bois et d'écailles, appliquées en minuscules losanges, dessinent un tableau fabuleux; un univers de rosaces et de guirlandes entrelacées au milieu desquelles surgit, botticellesque, une nymphe vêtue de ses seuls cheveux."

p. 200

33 ANON.
Untitled: Meeting between the Czar of Russia and the President of France. (F).
(Q: Kafka, La Muraille de Chine).
Popular woodcut (Image d'Epinal).

"[...] un lot d'images d'Epinal telles qu'on en distribuait à l'école primaire lorsqu'on avait obtenu un nombre suffisant de bons points: celle du dessus représente *la rencontre sur un vaisseau de guerre du Czar et du Président de la République française. Partout jusqu'à l'horizon ce ne sont que navires dont la fumée se perd dans un ciel sans nuages. A grands pas, le Czar et le Président viennent de s'avancer l'un vers l'autre, et se donnent la main. Derrière le Czar, comme derrière le Président se tiennent deux messieurs; par contraste avec la joie manifeste des visages des deux chefs, leurs visages paraissent graves. Les regards des deux escortes se concentrent sur leurs souverains respectifs. En bas - la scène a lieu visiblement sur le haut-pont du navire - à demi coupées par la marge de l'image, de longues rangées de matelots se dressent au garde-à-vous.* [Q: Kafka, La Muraille de Chine]".

p. 205

34 (a) LUCERO. (F).
Untitled: Portrait of Gormas. (F).
In Gilbert Berger's serial story.

34 (b) GOTLIB French caricaturist
Les Aventures du commissaire Bougret.
Comic book.

"Dans le premier épisode, *Pour l'Amour de Constance*, un acteur célèbre, François Gormas, demande au peintre Lucero qui vient d'obtenir le grand prix de Rome de faire un portrait de lui dans la scène qui lui a valu son plus grand triomphe, celle où, incarnant d'Artagnan, il se bat contre Rochefort pour l'amour de la jeune et jolie Constance Bonacieux. [...] ce roman-feuilleton dont on peut sans trop de peine identifier quelques-unes des sources immédiates: [...] les aventures du commissaire Bougret et de son fidèle adjoint Charolles dans les *Rubriques à Brac* de Gotlib [...]"

p. 207-209

37 ANON.
Untitled: Musicians playing antique instruments.
Watercolour.

"[...] sur le mur du fond, une aquarelle de grande dimension représente des musiciens jouant d'instruments anciens."

p. 218

38 VALENE, Serge. (F). French painter, 1900-1975.
Untitled: Jack of clubs.
Pencil drawing on envelope.

"Valène avait évidemment un crayon dans sa poche et quand ils eurent réussi à découper à peu près proprement avec les petits ciseaux à ongles de Flora Champigny un morceau d'enveloppe d'un format adéquat, il exécuta en quelques traits un valet de trèfle tout à fait présentable, qui déclencha de la part de ses trois compagnons des sifflements d'admiration suscités par la ressemblance (Raymond Albin), la vitesse d'exécution (Monsieur Jerôme) et la beauté intrinsèque (Mademoiselle Flora Champigny)."
p. 221

39 (a) GAULTIER, Léonard. 17th Century.
Les Neuf Muses.
Series of engravings depicting Shakespeare's greatest female roles. Attributed by Léon Marcia to:

CHENANY, Jeanne de. (A: Van Eyck, "Arnolfini").

"Sa réputation s'établit aux débuts des années trente lorsqu'il démontra dans une série d'articles publiée dans le *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* que la suite de petites gravures attribuée à Léonard Gaultier et vendue chez Sotheby's en 1899 sous le titre *Les Neuf Muses*, représentait en fait les neuf plus célèbres héroïnes de Shakespeare -Cressida, Desdémone, Juliette, Lady Macbeth, Ophélie, Portia, Rosalinde, Titania et Viola - et était l'oeuvre de *Jeanne de Chénany* [A: Van Eyck, "Arnolfini"], attribution qui fit justement sensation puisque l'on ne connaissait alors aucune oeuvre de cet artiste [...]"

p. 224

39 (b) ANON. American artist.
Untitled: Locomotive with giant smokestack.* (F).
Print.

* Possible allusion to LC, 9.

"[...] sur la couverture de l'*American Journal* est reproduite *une ancienne et splendide estampe américaine, éblouissante d'or et de rouge, de vert et d'indigo: une locomotive à la cheminée gigantesque, avec des grosses lanternes de style baroque et un formidable chasse-bestiaux, hâlant ses wagons mauves à travers la nuit de la Prairie fouaillée par la tempête, mêlant ses volutes de fumée noire constellée d'étincelles à la sombre fourrure des nuages prêts à crever.* [Q: Nabokov, Lolita]."

p. 227

44 (a) ANON.
Entrevue du Camp du Drap d'or.*
Puzzle. 14x9 cm.

* Also in UCDA, 59n and 103 (attributed to Guillaume Rorret).

44 (b) ANON.
Soirée dans un cottage anglais.
Puzzle. 14x9 cm.

44 (c) ANON. Russian artist.
Untitled: Peacock.
Puzzle. 14x9 cm.

44 (d) WINCKLER, Marguerite.(F). French Miniaturist, 1911-1943.
La dernière Expédition à la Recherche de Franklin.*
Gouache/ Puzzle. 14x9 cm.

* See also p. 309.

"Pour trouver son faiseur de puzzle, Bartlebooth mit une annonce dans *Le Jouet français* et dans *Toy Trader,* demandant aux candidats de lui soumettre un échantillon de quatorze centimètres sur neuf découpé en deux cents pièces; il reçut douze réponses; la plupart étaient banales et sans attrait, du genre "Entrevue du Camp du Drap d'or", ou "Soirée dans un cottage anglais" avec tous ses détails de couleur locale: la vieille Lady avec sa robe de soie noire et sa broche hexagonale en quartz, le maître d'hôtel apportant le café sur un plateau, le mobilier Regency et *le portrait de l'ancêtre, un gentleman à petit favoris, en habit rouge de l'époque des dernières diligences, portant culotte blanche, bottes à revers, haut-de- forme gris, et tenant une badine à la main* [Q: Leiris, Aurore], le guéridon couvert d'un petit tapis fait de pièces rapportées, la table près du mur avec des numéros étalés du *Times*, le grand tapis chinois à fond bleu ciel, le général en retraite - reconnaissable à ses cheveux gris coupés en brosse, sa courte moustache blanche, son teint rougeaud et sa brochette de décorations - à côté de la fenêtre, consultant d'un aire rogue le baromètre, le jeune homme debout devant la cheminée plongé dans la lecture de *Punch*, etc. Un autre modèle, qui représentait simplement un magnifique paon en train de faire la roue plut suffisamment à Bartlebooth pour qu'il convoquât son auteur, mais celui-ci - un prince russe émigré qui vivait plutôt misérablement au Raincy - lui parut trop vieux pour ses projets.

Le puzzle de Gaspard Winckler répondit tout à fait à l'attente de Bartlebooth. Winckler l'avait decoupé dans une sorte d'image d'Epinal, signée des initiales M. W. et intitulée *La dernière Expédition à la Recherche de Franklin;* pendant les premières heures où il entreprit de le résoudre, Bartlebooth crut qu'il consistait seulement en variations sur le blanc; en fait, le corps principal du dessin représentait un navire, le *Fox,* pris dans la banquise: debout près du gouvernail couvert de glace, emmitoufflés dans des fourrures

gris clair dont leur visage terreux émerge à peine, deux hommes, le capitaine M'Clintoch, chef de l'expédition, et son interprète d'inupik, Carl Petersen, lèvent les bras en direction d'un groupe d'Esquimaux qui sort d'un brouillard épais couvrant tout l'horizon, et vient vers eux sur des traîneaux tirés par des chiens; aux quatre angles du dessin, quatre cartouches montraient respectivement la mort de Sir John Franklin, succombant à la fatigue le onze juin 1847 dans les bras de ses deux chirurgiens, Peddie et Stanley; les deux navires de l'expédition, l'*Erebus*, que commandait Fitz-James, et le *Terror*, que commandait Crozier; et la découverte le six mai 1859, sur la terre du roi Guillaume, par le lieutenant Hobson, second du *Fox*, du *cairn* contenant le dernier message laissé par les cinq cents survivants le vingt-cinq avril 1848 avant qu'ils n'abandonnent les navires écrasés par les glaces pour tenter de regagner en traîneau ou à pied la baie d'Hudson."

pp. 251-52

45 (a) OUDRY, Jean-Baptiste. (R). French painter and illustrator, 1686-1755.
<u>Le Renard et la Cicogne</u> (sic). (R).
Illustration of La Fontaine's fable, Dessaint et Saillant, 1775. Fig. 70
Reproduction of an engraving on a blotter.

"Selon des critères qui n'appartiennent qu'à lui, Rémi Plassaert a classé ses buvards en huit tas respectivement surmontés par:[...]
- *Le Renard et la Cicogne* (sic), gravure de Jean-Baptiste Oudry (Papeteries Marquaize, Stencyl, Reprographie)[...]"

p. 256

45 (b) GERBAULT, Henry. French draftsman , 1900
Illustration of the song " Papa les p'tits bateaux".
Reproduction of a drawing on a blotter.

"En avant de ces huit tas, seul, se trouve le plus ancien de ces buvards, celui qui fut le prétexte de la collection; il est offert par Ricqlès - la *menthe forte qui réconforte* - et reproduit très joliment un dessin d'Henry Gerbault illustrant la chanson *Papa les p'tits bateaux:* le "papa" est un petit garçon en redingote grise à col noir, haut-de-forme, lorgnons, gants, stick, pantalons bleus, guêtres blanches; l'enfant est un bébé avec un grand chapeau rouge, un grand col de dentelle, une veste à ceinture rouge et des guêtre beiges; il tient dans la main gauche un cerceau, dans la droite un bâton, et désigne un petit bassin circulaire sur lequel flottent trois petits bateaux; un moineau est posé sur le bord du bassin; un autre volette à l'intérieur du rectangle dans lequel s'inscrit le texte de la chanson."

pp. 256-57

45 (c) VAN GOGH, Vincent. (R). Dutch impressionist, 1853-1890.
The Artist's Room in Arles. (R). 1889. **Fig. 71**
Oil on canvas. 57,5x74 cm.
Musée d'Orsay.

"Le précédent occupant était Troyan, le libraire d'occasion *de la rue Lepic (1). Dans sa mansarde il y avait effectivement un radiateur, et aussi un lit, une manière de grabat couvert d'une cotonnade à fleurs complètement décolorée, une chaise paillée, et un meuble de toilette dont le broc, la cuvette et le verre étaient dépareillés et ébrechés* [...]"
p. 257

(1) Van Gogh's brother, Theo, lived in rue Lepic.

45 (d) ANON.
Untitled: The Prince and the Dragon.*
Engraving.

* Possible allusion to Carpaccio's "Saint George slaying the Dragon". **Fig. 48**

"Monsieur Troquet mit la main sur une gravure représentant un prince en armure qui, monté sur un cheval ailé, pourchaissait de sa lance un monstre avec une tête et une crinière de lion, un corps de chèvre et une queue de serpent [...]"
p. 257

45 (e) DE NEUVILLE & BENNETT. French Illustrators.
Untitled: Portrait of William Hitch. (R).
Illustration of J. Verne, Le Tour du monde en 80 jours, Ed. Hetzel, Ldp, 1965, p. 237.
Fig. 72

Postcard

"Monsieur Cinoc dénicha une vieille carte postale, le portrait d'*un missionaire mormon du nom de William Hitch, un homme de haute taille, très brun, moustaches noires, bas noir, chapeau de soie noir, gilet noir, pantalon noir, cravate blanche, gants de peau de chien* [Q: Verne, Tour du monde] [...]" p. 257-58

47 (a) LA TOUR, Georges. (R). French painter, 1593-1652.
L'Adoration des Bergers. (R) * c. 1644. **Fig. 73**
Oil on canvas. 107x137 cm.
Musée du Louvre.

* The choice of this painting is personal. Other paintings by La Tour could have been reproduced here.

"[...] des tables gi<ognes avec divers magazines et périodiques étalés: sur la couverture de l'un d'eux, on voit une photographie en couleurs de Franco sur son lit de mort, veillé par quatre moines agenouillés qui semblent tout droit sortir d'un tableau de de La Tour [...]"

p. 267

47 (b) ANON
Untitled: Interior of a cafe.
Pseudo-naïve painting. 300x200 cm.

"Il y a plusieurs tableaux sur les murs. L'un d'eux attire particulièrement l'attention, moins par sa facture pseudo "naïve" que par sa taille - presque trois mètres sur deux - et son sujet: l'intérieur minutieusement, presque laborieusement, traité d'un bistrot: au centre, accoudé devant un comptoir, *un jeune homme à lunettes mord dans un sandwich au jambon (avec du beurre et beaucoup de moutarde)* [A: Queneau, Pierrot mon ami] tout en buvant un demi de bière. Derrière lui se dresse un billard électrique dont le décor représente une Espagne - ou un Méxique - de pacotille avec, entre les quatre cadrans, une femme jouant de l'éventail. Par un effet abondamment utilisé dans les peintures du Moyen Age, ce même jeune homme à lunettes s'affaire sur l'appareil, victorieusement d'ailleurs, puisque *son compteur marque 67 000 alors que 20 000 suffisent pour avoir droit à la partie gratuite* [A: Queneau, Pierrot mon ami]. Quatre enfants, en rang d'oignons le long de l'appareil, les yeux à la hauteur de la bille, contemplent avec jubilation ses exploits: trois garçonnets avec des chandails chinés et des bérets, ressemblant à l'image traditionnelle des petits poulbots, et une fillette qui porte autour du cou un cordonnet de fil noir tressé sur lequel est enfilée une unique boule rouge, et qui tient dans la main gauche une pêche. Au premier plan, juste derrière la vitre du café [...] deux hommes jouent au tarot: l'un d'eux abat la carte représentant *un homme armé d'un bâton, portant besace et poursuivi par un chien, que l'on nomme le mat, c'est-a-dire le fou* [A: Bosch, "The Hay Wagon"].
A gauche, derrière le comptoir, le patron, un homme obèse en bras de chemise avec des bretelles écossaises, regarde avec circonspection une affiche qu'une jeune femme à l'air timide lui demande vraisemblablement de mettre en devanture: en haut, *un long cornet métallique, très pointu, percé de plusieurs trous* [Q: Roussel, Locus Solus]; au centre, l'annonce de la création mondiale en l'église Saint-Saturnin de Champigny le samedi dix-neuf décembre 1960 à 20h45 de *Malakhitès,* opus 35, pour quinze cuivres, voix humaine et percussion, de Morris Schmetterling, par les *New Brass Ensemble of Michigan State University* at *East Lansing,* sous la direction du compositeur. Tout en bas, un plan de Champigny-sur-Marne précisant les itinéraires à partir des portes de Vincennes, de Picpus et de Bercy."

pp. 268-69

48 ANON.
Untitled: Sex scene with the gnomes.
Chinese print.

"à Mademoiselle Crespi elle [Mme Albin] a montré [...] une estampe érotique chinoise représentant une femme couchée sur le dos honorée par six petits gnomes aux visages tout ridés [...]"

p. 273

50 FOULEROT, Louis. (F).
L'assassinat des poissons rouges.
Painting.

"Le tableau lui-même représente une chambre. Sur l'appui de la fenêtre il y a un bocal de poissons rouges et un pot de réséda. Par la fenêtre grande ouverte, on apercoit un paysage champêtre: *le ciel d'un bleu tendre, arrondi comme un dôme, s'appuie à l'horizon sur la dentelure des bois; au premier plan, sur le bord de la route, une petite fille, nu-pieds dans la poussière, fait paître une vache. Plus loin, un peintre en blouse bleue travaille au pied d'un chêne avec sa boîte de couleurs sur les genoux* [Q: Flaubert: Education Sentimentale]. *Tout au fond miroite un lac sur les rives duquel se dresse une ville brumeuse avec des maisons aux vérandas entassées les unes sur les autres et des rues hautes dont les parapets a balustres dominent l'eau* [Q: Calvino, Città invisibili]. Devant la fenêtre, un peu à gauche, un homme, vêtu d'un uniforme de fantaisie - pantalon blanc, veste d'indienne surchargée d'épaulettes, de plaques, de sabretaches, de brandebourgs, grande cape noire, botte à éperons - est assis devant une écritoire rustique - une ancienne table d'école communale avec un trou pour l'encrier et un pupitre très légèrement incliné - sur laquelle sont posés une carafe d'eau, un de ces verres appelés *flûtes* et un chandelier dont le socle est un admirable oeuf d'ivoire serti d' argent. L'homme vient de recevoir une lettre et la lit avec une expression de complet abattement.
Juste à gauche de la fenêtre un téléphone mural est accroché et, un peu plus à gauche encore, un tableau: il représente *un paysage de bord de mer avec au premier plan une perdrix perchée sur la branche d'un arbre sec dont le tronc tordu et tourmenté jaillit d'un amas de rochers qui s'évase en une crique bouillonnante. Au loin, sur la mer, une barque à voile triangulaire* [A: Breugel, "Icarus"].
A droite de la fenêtre, il y a un grand miroir au cadre doré dans lequel est supposée se refléter une scène qui aurait lieu dans le dos du personnage assis. Trois personnes sont debout, elles aussi déguisées, une femme et deux hommes. La femme porte une longue robe sévère, en laine grise, et une coiffe de quakeresse, et tient une jarre de pickles sous le bras; un des hommes, un quadragénaire maigre à l'air anxieux, est vêtu d'un costume de bouffons du Moyen Age, avec un pourpoint divisé en longues pièces triangulaires alternativement rouges et jaunes, une marotte et un bonnet à grelots; l'autre homme, un jeunot à l'air fadasse, avec des rares cheveux jaunes et un air poupin, est déguisé en gros bébé, avec une culotte caoutchoutée gonflée de langes et de couches, des petites chaussettes blanches, des bottines vernies, un bavoir; il suce cette sorte de hochet en celluloïd que les bébés se fourrent tout le temps dans la bouche et tient dans la main un biberon géant dont les graduations évoquent en termes familiers ou semi-argotiques les exploits ou fiascos amoureux censés correspondre aux quantités d'alcool absorbées [...]"

p. 284

51 VALENE, Serge. (F). French painter, 1900-1975.
Untitled: Rue Simon-Crubellier. (F).
Paint on canvas. Unfinished.

pp. 290-298.

52 ANTONELLO DA MESSINA.(R). Italian painter, c. 1430-1479.
Le Condottiere.* (R) 1475. **Fig. 74**
Oil on wood. 36,2x30 cm.
Musée du Louvre.
Reproduction.

* Also in Le Condottiere, UHQD, 93, Wse, 142.

"[...] la reproduction d'un portrait du Quattrocento, un homme au visage à la fois énergique et gras, avec une toute petite cicatrice au-dessus de la lèvre supérieure [...]"
p. 306

53 (a) WINCKLER, Marguerite. (F). French miniaturist, 1911-1943.
Untitled: Lost Ambitions.*
Retouched photograph.

* See also ch. 1

"C'est là, en face du lit, à côté de la fenêtre, qu'il y avait ce tableau carré que le faiseur de puzzles aimait tant et qui représentait trois hommes vêtus de noir dans une antichambre; ce n'était pas une peiture, mais une photographie retouchée, découpée dans *La Petite Illustration* ou dans *La Semaine teâtrale.* Elle représentait la scène 1 de l'acte III des *Ambitions perdues*, mélodrame sombre d' un imitateur médiocre d'Henry Bernstein nommé Paulin-Alfort, et montrait les deux témoins du héros - interprété par Max Corneille - venant le chercher à son domicile une demi-heure avant le duel dans lequel il trouvera sa mort .
C'est Marguerite qui avait découvert cette photographie au fond d'une de ces caisses de livres d'occasion qu'il y avait encore à l'époque sous les arcades du Théâtre de l'Odéon: elle l'avait collée sur une toile, arrangée, coloriée, encadrée, et en avait fait cadeau à Gaspard à l'occasion de leur installation rue Simon-Crubellier."
p. 308

53 (b) WINCKLER, Marguerite. (F) French miniaturist, 1911-1943.
Untitled: Mysterious Landscape. (F).
Miniature.

"[...] sur l'à-plat d'émail d'une chevalière, elle restituait un paysage énigmatique où, *sous un ciel auroral, parmi des herbes pâles bordant un lac gelé, un âne flairait les racines d'un arbre; sur le tronc était clouée une lanterne grise;* [A: Mathews] dans les branches un nid, vide, était posé."

p. 309

53 (c) STEINBERG, Saul. (R). American caricaturist.
Untitled drawing from The Passport. (R) 1954. **Fig. 75**
Drawing.

"*Sa table était un éternel capharnaüm, tojours encombrée de tout un matériel inutile, de tout un entassement d'objets hétéroclites [...]: lettres, verres, bouteilles, étiquettes, porte-plumes, assiettes, boîtes d'allumettes, tasses, tubes, ciseaux, carnets, médicaments, billets de banque, menue monnaie, compas, photographies, coupures de presse, timbres; et des feuilles volantes, des pages arrachées à des bloc-notes ou à des éphémérides, un pèse-lettre, un compte-fil de laiton, l'encrier de gros verre taillé, les boîtes de plumes, la boîte verte et noire de 100 plumes de La République n° 705 de Gilbert et Blanzy-Poure, et la boîte beige et bise de 144 plumes à la ronde n° 394 de Baignol et Farjon, le coupe-papier à manche de corne, les gommes, les boîtes de punaises et d'agrafes, les limes à ongles en carton émerisé, et l'immortelle dans son soliflore de chez Kirby Beard, et le paquet de cigarettes Athletic avec le sprinter au maillot blanc rayé de bleu portant un dossard avec le numéro 39 écrit en rouge franchissant bien loin devant les autres la ligne d'arrivée, et les clés reliées par une chaînette, le double décimètre en bois jaune, la boîte avec l'inscription CURIOUSLY STRONG ALTOIDS PEPPERMINT OIL* [A: Butor, Répertoire IV], le pot de faïence bleue avec tous ses crayons, le presse-papier en onyx, les petits godets hémisphériques un peu analogues à ceux dont on se sert pour les bains d'yeux (ou pour cuire les escargots), dans lesquels elle mélangeait ses couleurs, et la coupelle en métal anglais, dont les deux compartiments étaient toujours remplis, l'un de pistaches salées, l'autre de bonbons à la violette."

p. 310

53 (d) WINCKLER, Marguerite. (F). French miniaturist, 1911-1943.
Untitled: 2 portraits.
Miniature. Diam: 3 cm.

"[...] au milieu d'une abondance de feuillages, de guirlandes et d'entrelacs imitant une marqueterie, Marguerite peignit dans deux cercles de trois centimètres de diamètre, deux portraits: un jeune homme au visage un peu mièvre, vu de trois quarts, perruque poudrée, veste noire, gilet jaune, cravate de dentelle blanche, qui se tient, un coude appuyé sur une cheminée de marbre, devant un grand rideau saumon à demi tiré, dévoilant partiellement une fenêtre par laquelle se distingue une grille; et une jeune femme, belle, un peu grasse, avec de grands yeux bruns et des joues vermeilles, une perruques poudrée avec un ruban rose et une rose, et un fichu de mousseline blanche largement décolleté."

p. 312

54 ANON.
Petis métiers de Paris. *
16 Drawings.

* Many Epinal woodcuts depict this subject. None of the ones held at the BibliothèqueNationale (Dept. des Estampes) corresponds to the one described by Perec, which is in fact a quotation from Proust.

"Derrière eux, sur le mur [...] sont accrochés seize petits dessins rectangulaires, dont la facture rappelle les caricatures fin-de-siècle. Ils représentent les classiques "petits métiers de Paris" avec, en légende, pour chacun, leur cri caractéristique." [Follows: Q: Proust, La Prisonnière]

p. 320

57 BARTLEBOOTH, Percival (F) English watercolour artist, 1900-1975.
Untitled: A Fishing port on Vancouver Island. (F).
Watercolour.

"Une fois même - chose qu'il n'avait jamais faite avec personne et qu'il ne fit jamais plus - il lui montra le puzzle qu'il reconstituait cette quinzaine-là: c'était un port de pêche de l'île de Vancouver, Hammertown, un port blanc de neige, avec quelques maisons basses et quelques pêcheurs en vestes fourrées halant sur la grêve une longue barque blême."

p. 340

58 GRATIOLET, Olivier. (F). Rebus inventor, b. 1920.
Contentement passe richesse (Q: Butor, Les Mots dans la peinture).
Rebus.

"Le dernier [rebus] représente *un fleuve; sur la proue d'une barque, une femme assise somptueusement vêtue, entourée de sacs d'or, de coffres entrouverts débordant de joyaux; sa tête est remplacée par la lettre "S"; à la poupe, debout, un personnage masculin à couronne comptale fait office de passeur; sur sa cape sont brodées les lettres "ENTE MENT". Réponse "Contentement passe richesse."* [Q: Butor Les Mots dans la peinture - attributed to "Le Monde illustré d'il y a cent ans"].

p. 347

59 (a) VAN DER WEYDEN, Roger. (R). Flemish painter, 1399-1464.
Tryptique du Jugement dernier. (R).* 1443-51. **Fig. 76**
Oil on wood. 213x560 cm.
Hôtel-Dieu, Beaune (Burgundy).
Reproduction.

*It is in fact a polyptych

"une reproduction en couleurs du *Tryptique du Jugement dernier* de Roger Van der Weyden conservé à l'Hôtel-Dieu de Beaune [...]"

p. 349

59 (b) HUTTING FRANZ (F) French-American contemporary artist
La Comtesse de Berlingue aux yeux rouges. (F).
Potential painting.

"Il s'agissait de choisir les couleurs d'un portrait à partir d'une séquence inamovible de onze teintes et de trois chiffres-clés fournis, le premier par la date et l'heure de la «naissance» du tableau, «naissance» voulant dire première séance de pose, le second par la phase de la lune au moment de la «conception» du tableau, «conception» se référant à la circonstance qui avait déclenché le tableau, par exemple un coup de téléphone proposant la commande, et le troisième par le prix demandé. [...] Certes, sa *Comtesse de Berlingue aux yeux rouges* connut un succès mérité [...]."

p. 352

59 (c) HUTTING, Franz. (F). French-American contemporary artist.
24 Imaginary Portraits.* (F):
Potential paintings.

* Each of the following titles hides the name of a member of the Oulipo. The paintings are also executed according to a constraint.

1. THAM DOULI PORTANT LES AUTHENTIQUES *TRACTEURS METALLIQUES* RENCONTRE TROIS PERSONNES DEPLACEES

2. COPPELIA ENSEIGNE A NOE L'ART NAUTIQUE

3. SEPTIME SEVERE APPREND QUE LES NEGOCIATIONS AVEC LE BEY N'ABOUTIRONT QUE S'IL LUI DONNE SA SOEUR SEPTIMIA OCTAVILLA

4. JEAN-LOUIS GIRARD COMMENTE LE CELEBRE SIXAIN D'ISAAC DE BENSERADE

5. LE COMTE DE BELLERVAL (DER GRAF VON BELLERVAL), LOGICIEN ALLEMAND DISCIPLE DE LUKASIEWICZ, DEMONTRE EN PRESENCE DE SON MAITRE QU'UNE ILE EST UN ESPACE CLOS DE BERGES

6. JULES BARNAVAUX SE REPENT DE NE PAS AVOIR TENU COMPTE DU DOUBLE AVIS EXPOSE DANS LES W.C. DU MINISTERE

7. NERO WOLFE SURPREND LE CAPITAINE FIERABRAS FORÇANT LE COFFRE-FORT DE LA CHASE MANHATTAN BANK

8. LE BASSET OPTIMUS MAXIMUS ARRIVE A LA NAGE A CALVI, NOTANT AVEC SATISFACTION QUE LE MAIRE L'ATTEND AVEC UN OS

9. «LE TRADUCTEUR ANTIPODAIRE» REVELE A ORPHEE QUE SON CHANT BERCE LES ANIMAUX

10. LIVINGSTONE, S'APERCEVANT QUE LA PRIME PROMISE PAR LORD RAMSAY LUI ECHAPPE, MANIFESTE SA MAUVAISE HUMEUR

11. R. MUTT EST RECALE A L'ORAL DU BAC POUR AVOIR SOUTENU QUE ROUGET DE L'ISLE ETAIT L'AUTEUR DU *CHANT DU DEPART*

12. BORIET-TORY BOIT DU CHATEAU-LATOUR EN REGARDANT «L'HOMME AUX LOUPS» DANSER LE FOX-TROT

13. LE JEUNE SEMINARISTE REVE DE VISITER LUCQUES ET T'IEN-TSIN

14. MAXIMILEN, DEBARQUANT A MEXICO, S'ENFOURNE ELEGAMMENT ONZE TORTILLAS

15. «LE POSTEUR DE RIMES» EXIGE QUE SON FERMIER TONDE LA LAINE DE SES MOUTONS ET QUE SA FEMME LA TISSE

16. NARCISSE FOLLANINIO, FINALISTE AUX JEUX FLORAUX D'AMSTERDAM, OUVRE UN DICTIONNAIRE DE RIMES ET LE LIT AU NEZ DES SURVEILLANTS DE L'EPREUVE

17. ZENON DE DIDYME, CORSAIRE DES ANTILLES, AYANT REÇU DE GUILLAUME III UNE FORTE SOMME D'ARGENT, LAISSE CURAÇAO SANS DEFENSE FACE AUX HOLLANDAIS

18. LA FEMME DU DIRECTEUR DE L'USINE DE REMOULAGE DES LAMES DE RASOIR AUTORISE SA FILLE A SORTIR SEULE DANS LES RUES DE PARIS A CONDITION QUE, QUAND ELLE DESCEND LE BOUL'MICH', ELLE METTE AILLEURS QUE DANS SON CORSAGE SES TRAVELLER'S CHEQUES

19. L'ACTEUR ARCHIBALD MOON HESITE POUR SON PROCHAIN SPECTACLE ENTRE JOSEPH D'ARIMATHIE OU ZARATHOUSTRA

20. LE PEINTRE HUTTING ESSAYE D'OBTENIR D'UN INSPECTEUR POLYVALENT DES CONTRIBUTION UNE PEREQUATION DE SES IMPOTS

21. LE DOCTEUR LAJOIE EST RADIE DE L'ORDRE DES MEDECINS POUR AVOIR DECLARE EN PUBLIC QUE WILLIAM RANDOLPH HEARST, SORTANT D'UNE PROJECTION DE *CITIZEN KANE*, AURAIT MONNAYE L'ASSASSINAT D'ORSON WELLES

22. AVANT DE PRENDRE LA MALLE DE HAMBOURG, JAVERT SE SOUVIENT QUE VALJEAN LUI A SAUVE LA VIE

23. LE GEOGRAPHE LECOMPTE, DESCENDANT LE FLEUVE HAMILTON, EST HEBERGE PAR DES ESKIMOS, ET POUR LES REMERCIER OFFRE UNE CAROUBE AU CHEF DU VILLAGE

24. LE CRITIQUE MOLINET INAUGURE SON COURS AU COLLEGE DE FRANCE EN ESQUISSANT AVEC BRIO LES PORTRAITS DE VINTEUIL, D'ELSTIR, DE BERGOTTE ET DE LA BERMA, RICHES MYTHES DE L'ART IMPRESSIONISTE DONT LES LECTEURS DE MARCEL PROUST N'ONT PAS FINI DE FAIRE L'EXEGESE.

pp. 350-52

61 BERGER. (F).
Untitled: Oriental landscape.
Painting.

"Au-dessus de la desserte est accroché un tableau représentant un paysage asiatique, avec des arbustes bizarrement contournés, un groupe d'indigènes coiffés de grands chapeaux conique et des jonques à l'horizon. Il aurait été peint par l'arrière grand-père de Charles Berger, un sous-officier de carrière qui aurait fait la campagne du Tonkin."

p. 367

62 ANON.
Untitled: Spaghetti and Cocoa.
Hyperrealist painting.

"Au-dessus du canapé est accrochée une grande toile hyper-réaliste représentant un plat de spaghetti fumants et un paquet de cacao Van Houten."

p. 372

64 ANON.
Untitled: Ice-skaters on the Neva.
Watercolour.

"Il [Olivier Gratiolet] y trouva [...] une aquarelle défraîchie représentant des patineurs sur la Neva, [...]"

p. 381

66 (a) ANON.
Untitled: Peacock.
Engraving.

"[...] une étonnante gravure, vraisemblablement destinée à un ancien ouvrage de sciences naturelles, représentant à gauche un paon *(peacock), vu de profil, épure sévère et rigide où le plumage se ramasse en une masse indistincte et presque terne et auquel seuls le grand oeil bordé de blanc et l'aigrette en couronne donnent un frisson de vie* [A: Antonello, "Saint Jerome"], et à gauche, le même animal, vu de face, faisant la roue (*peacock in his pride*), exubérance de couleurs, chatoiements, scintillements, éclatements, flamboiements auprès desquels un vitrail gothique semble une pâle copie."

p. 397

66 (b) CARMONTELLE (Louis Carrogis, known as) (R). French artist 1717-1806.
Study for Mozart's portrait (see next entry).
Charcoal and pastel.

66 (c) Léopold, Wolfgang et Maria-Anna Mozart. (R). 1777. **Fig. 77**
Charcoal and pastel. 32x20 cm.
Musée Carnavalet.

"Le deuxième objet est posé sur un petit chevalet en forme de lyre. C'est une étude de Carmontelle - fusain rehaussé de pastels - pour son portrait de Mozart enfant; elle diffère par plusieurs détails du tableau définitif conservé aujourd'hui à Carnavalet: Léopold Mozart ne se tient pas derrière la chaise de son fils, mais de l'autre côté, et tourné de trois quarts de manière à pouvoir surveiller l'enfant tout en lisant la partition; quant a Maria-Anna, elle n'est pas de profil de l'autre côte du clavecin, mais de face, devant le clavecin, masquant partiellement la partition que le jeune prodige déchiffre; on conçoit volontiers que Léopold ait demandé à l'artiste les modifications qui ont abouti au tableau final et qui, sans léser le fils de sa position centrale, donnent au père une place un peu moins défavorisée."

p. 398

66 (d) ANON.
Untitled: The Prince and the sleeping Princess.
Persian miniature on parchment.

"Le troisième objet est une grande feuille de parchemin, encadrée d'ébène, posée obliquement sur un support qu'on ne voit pas. La moitié supérieure de la feuille reproduit très finement une miniature persane; alors que le jour va se lever, un jeune prince, sur les terrasses d'un palais, regarde dormir une princesse aux pieds de laquelle il est agenouillé. Sur la moitié inférieure de la feuille, six vers d'Ibn Zaydûn sont élégamment calligraphiés:" [follows: Q: Proust, Le Temps retrouvé].

p. 398

68 ANON.
Untitled: Rastignac at the Père-Lachaise cemetery.*
Romantic engraving.

* Possible allusion to LC

"[...] une gravure romantique représentant Rastignac au Père-Lachaise, dans un sac d chaussur Weston [...]"

p. 406

69 (a) MORRELL D'HOAXVILLE, Arthur. (F) English portrait artist, 19th century
Untitled: Portrait of the brothers Dunn. (F).
Painting.

"[...] le premier [tableau] est le portrait par Morrell d'Hoaxville, peintre anglais du siècle dernier, *des frères Dunn, clergymen du Dorset, experts, l'un et l'autre en d'obscures matières, la paléopédologie et les harpes éoliennes* [Q: Nabokov, Lolita]. Herbert Dunn, le spécialiste des harpes éolienne est à gauche: c'est un homme de haute taille, maigre, vêtu d'un costume de flanelle noire, portant un collier de barbe rousse et des lunettes ovales sans monture. Jeremie Dunn, le paléopédologue, est un petit homme rond, représenté dans son costume de travail, c'est-à-dire équipé pour une expédition sur le terrain avec *un havresac de soldat, une chaîne d'arpenteur, une lime, des pinces, une boussole et trois marteaux passés dans sa ceinture, plus un bâton de marche plus haut que lui, à la longue pointe de fer, dont la main haut levée, il agrippe le pommeau.* [Q: Flaubert, Bouvard et Pecuchet]."

p. 409

69 (b) TRAPP, Organ. (F). (A: Nabokov, Lolita). American Hyperrealist artist.
Untitled: Service Station at Sheridan. (F).
Painting.

"Le second [tableau] est une oeuvre du peintre américain Organ Trapp, dont Hutting fit faire la connaissance aux Altamont il y a une dizaine d'années à Corfou. Elle montre dans tous ses détails une station-service de Sheridan, Wyoming: *une poubelle verte, des pneus à vendre, très noirs avec des flancs très blancs, des bidons d'huile resplendissants, une glacière vermillon avec des boissons assorties.* [Q: Nabokov, Lolita]."

p. 409

69 (c) PRIOU. Draftsman
L'Ouvrier ébéniste de la rue du Champ-de-Mars. (F) (A: Jarry, Ubu).
Drawing.

"La troisième oeuvre est un dessin signé Priou et intitulé *L'ouvrier ébéniste de la rue du Champ-de-Mars:* un jeune garçon d'une vingtaine d'années, vêtu d'un chandail chiné et d'un pantalon retenu par une ficelle, se chauffe à un feu de copeaux."

p. 409

69 (d) RICHMOND, Helena. Romantic engraver.
Illustrations of A Midsummer Night's Dream.
Steel engraving.

"[...] quelques livres d'art et éditions de luxe, dont un *Songe d'une nuit d'été* romantique avec des gravures sur acier d'Helena Richmond, [...]".

p. 410

70 (a) BARTLEBOOTH, Percival. (F).English Watercolour artist, 1900-75.
Untitled: Coromandel Harbour. (F).
Watercolour.

"[...] l'aquarelle représentait un petit port de la côte de Coromandel."

p. 414

70 (b) HILL, W. E. (R). English caricaturist.
Untitled: Old and young woman.(R) **Fig. 78**
Caricature.

"Comme dans cette caricature de W. E. Hill qui représente *en même temps* une jeune et une vieille femme, l'oreille, la joue, le collier de la jeune étant respectivement un oeil, le nez et la bouche de la vieille, la vieille étant de profil en gros plan et la jeune de trois quarts dos cadrée à mi-épaule, Bartlebooth devait, pour trouver cet angle à vrai dire presque mais pas vraiment tout à fait droit, cesser de le considérer comme la pointe d'un triangle, c'est-à-dire faire basculer sa perception, voir *autrement* ce que fallacieusement l'autre lui donnait a voir [...]"

p. 415

70 (c) BARTLEBOOTH, Percival. (F).English watercolour artist, 1900-75.
Untitled: Avalon, Santa Catalina Island, California. (F). 1948.
Watercolour.

"[...] les taches jaunes du soleil couchant miroitant sur le Pacifique (non loin d'Avalon, Santa Catalina Island, Californie, novembre 1948) [...]"

p. 417

70 (d) BARTLEBOOTH, Percival. (F) English watercolour artist, 1900-75
Untitled: Launceston, Tasmania. (F). 1952.
Watercolour.

"[...] les bords n'étaient même pas finis, quinze petites Scandinavies rapprochées dès la première heure dessinaient la *silhouette sombre d'un homme en cape montant trois marches menant à une jetée, à demi retourné dans la direction du peintre* [A: Velasquez, "Meninas"] (Launceston, Tasmanie, octobre 1952) [...]"

p. 418

70 (e) BARTLEBOOTH, Percival. (F). English watercolour artist, 1900-75.
Untitled: Okinawa, Japan. (F). 1951.
Watercolour.

"Une autre fois [...] Bartlebooth envoya valser le plateau avec une telle force que la théière, propulsée quasi verticalement à la vitesse d'une balle de volée, fracassa le verre épais du scyalitique avant de se briser elle-même en mille morceaux qui retombèrent sur le puzzle (Okinawa, Japon, octobre 1951)."

p. 419

70 (f) BARTLEBOOTH, Percival. (F). English watercolour artist, 1900-75.
Untitled: Seashore at Elsinore. (A: Hamlet).
Watercolour.

"Une fois il resta assis 62 heures d'affilée - du mercredi matin huit heures au vendredi soir dix heures - devant un puzzle inachevé qui représentait la grève d'*Elseneur* [A: Hamlet]: frange grise entre une mer grise et un ciel gris."

p. 420

70 (g) BARTLEBOOTH, Percival. (F). English watercolour artist, 1900-75.
Untitled: Rippleson, Florida. (F).
Watercolour.

"Une autre fois, en mille neuf cent soixante-six, il rassembla dans les trois premières heures plus de deux tiers du puzzle de la quinzaine: la petite station balnéaire de Rippleson, en Floride. Puis, pendant les deux semaines qui suivirent, il tenta en vain de le finir: il avait devant lui *un petit bout de plage presque désert, avec un restaurant à une extrémité de la promenade et des rochers de granit à l'autre extrémité; au loin, à gauche, trois pêcheurs, chargeaient une chaloupe de filets brun varech; au centre une femme d'un certtain âge vêtue d'une robe à pois et coiffée d'un chapeau de gendarme en papier tricotait assise sur les galets; à côté d'elle, à plat ventre sur un tapis de fibres végétales, une petite fille avec un collier de coquillages mangeait des bananes séchées; à l'extrême droite, un garçon de plage, vêtu d'un vieux battledress, ramassait des parasols et des chaises longues; tout au fond une voile en forme de trapèze et deux îlots noirs cassaient la ligne d'horizon. Il manquait quelques ondulation de vagues et un morceau de ciel moutonnant: deux cent pièces d'un même bleu avec de minuscules variations blanches dont chacune lui demanda avant de trouver sa place plus de deux heures de travail* [Q: Nabokov, Feu pale]."

p. 420

71 (a) CEZANNE, Paul.(R). French painter, 1839-1906.
Les Joueurs de cartes. (R). c. 1890-95. **Fig. 79**
Oil on canvas. 47,5x57 cm.
Musée d'Orsay.
Reproduction on cigarette case.

"[ ] un service à fumeurs (avec une boîte à cigarette représentant *Les Joueurs de cartes* de Cézanne, un briquet à essence ressemblant assez à une lampe à huile, et quatre cendriers respectivement décorés d'un trefle, d'un carreau, d'un coeur, et d'un pique)."

p. 422

71 (b) ANON.
Untitled: The Judge. (F).
Painting.

"[...] entre les fenêtres, au-dessus d'un *coco weddelliana*, palmier d'appartement à feuillage décoratif, pendait une grande toile sombre montrant *un homme en robe de juge, assis sur un trône élevé dont la dorure éclaboussait tout le tableau.* [Q: Kafka, Le Procès]"

p. 422

72 DE MONTAUT. (R). French illustrator.
Illustration of J.Verne, L'Ile mystérieuse. Ed. Hetzel, Ldp, 1966, p. 317.
Fig. 80

"La troisième [malle] offrait encore tout ce qu'il aurait fallu si, ayant fait naufrage par suite de tempête, typhon, raz-de-marée, cyclone ou révolte de l'équipage, Bartlebooth et Smautf avaient eu à dériver sur une épave, aborder sur une île déserte et devoir y survivre. Son contenu reprenait, simplement modernisé, celui de la malle lestée de tonneaux vides que le capitaine Nemo fait échouer sur une plage à l'intention des braves colons de l'île Lincoln, et dont la nomenclature exacte, notée sur une feuille du carnet de Gédéon Spilett, occupe, accompagnée il est vrai de deux gravures presque pleine page, les pages 223 à 226 de *L'Ile Mystérieuse* (Ed Hetzel)."

p. 428

73 (a) ANON
Untitled: Suicide of Jean-Marie Roland de la Platière. (F) (A: Mathews, Conversions).
Engraving.

"[...] une gravure illustrant le suicide de Jean-Marie Roland de la Platière à Bourg-Baudoin (vêtu d'une culotte couleur parme et d'une veste rayée, le Conventionnel, à genoux, griffonne la courte lettre par laquelle il explique son geste. Par la porte entrebaillée on aperçoit un homme en carmagnole et bonnet phrygien, armé d'une longue pique, qui le regarde avec un air plein de haine) [...]"

p. 432

73 (b) BEMBO, Bonifacio. (R). Italian painter and miniaturist, c. 1447-77.
2 Tarot cards: "Le Diable" * and "La Maison de Dieu".*

* Perec places in Madame Marcia's shop two cards which are now lost, as Calvino explains in Il Castello dei Destini Incrociati: "Il s'agit d'un jeu de tarots peints par Bonifacio Bembo pour les ducs de Milan vers le milieu du XVe siècle, et qui se trouvent actuellement pour une part à l'Accademia Carrara de Bergame, pour l'autre part à la Morgan Library de New York. Quelques cartes du jeu de Bembo ont été perdues, dont deux très importantes pour mes narrations: *Le Diable* et *La Maison-Dieu.* Là où ces cartes sont appelées par mon texte, je n'ai pu par conséquent mettre en marge l'image correspondante." (Calvino, Le château des destins croisées., Seuil, 1976, p. 135)

"[...] deux tarots de Bembo représentant, l'un le diable, l'autre la Maison-Dieu [...]"
p. 432

75 ANON.
Illustration of Dumas, Vingt ans après.
Engraving.

"[...] l'autre [gravure] est une illustration de *Vingt ans après,* représentant l'évasion du duc de Beaufort: le duc vient de sortir du faux pâté en croûte deux poignards, une échelle de corde et une poire d'angoisse que Grimaud enfonce dans la bouche de La Ramée."

p. 449

76. ANON.
Untitled: "L'an VII les tuera".
Rebus.

"L'*Historie de France par les rébus*, ouvert sur un dessin montrant une sorte de bistouri, une salade et un rat, rébus dont la solution: l'An VII les tuera *(lancette, laitue, rat)* [Q: Stendhal, Vie d'Henri Brulard] vise, est-il expliqué, le Directoire [...]"
p. 453

77 (a) ANON.
Por Larranaga 89 cts. (F).
Facsimile of a fin-de-siècle poster.

"Le premier tableau est le fac-similé d'une affiche publicitaire datant du début du siècle: trois personnes se reposent sous une tonnelle; *un jeune homme, en pantalon blanc et vareuse bleue, canotier sur la tête, stick à pommeau d'argent sous le bras, a dans les mains une boîte de cigares, une jolie cassette laquée, ornée d'une mappemonde, de beaucoup de médailles et d'un pavillon d'exposition entouré de drapeaux flottants et décorés d'or. Un autre jeune homme, habillé de la même façon, est assis sur un pouf en osier; les mains dans les poches de son veston, ses pieds chaussés de noir étendus devant lui, il tient entre les lèvres, en le laissant pendre légèrement, un long cigare d'un gris mat qui se trouve encore dans le premier stade de la combustion, c'est-à-dire dont on n'a pas encore fait tomber la cendre* [Q: Mann, Magic Mountain]; près de lui, sur une table ronde recouverte d'un tissu à pois, se trouvent quelques journaux pliés, un gramophone avec un énorme pavillon, qu'il semble écouter religieusement, et un cabaret à liqueurs, ouvert, garni de cinq fioles aux bouchons dorés. Une jeune *femme, une blonde assez énigmatique, vêtue d'une robe mince et flottante, incline la sixième fiole, pleine d'une liqueur d'un brun soutenu dont elle emplit trois verres ballons* [Q: Mann, Magic Mountain]. Tout en bas à droite, en grosses lettres jaunes, creuses, de ce caractère appelé Auriol Champlevé qui fut abondamment utilisé au siècle dernier, sont écrits les mots **Por Larranaga 89 cts**"

p. 457

77 (b) ANON.
Untitled: Clématis. (F). (A: Mathews, Conversions).
Painting.

"Le deuxième tableau représente un bouquet de *clématites* des haies, également connues sous le nom d'*herbes-aux-gueux* [A: Mathews, Conversions] car les mendiants s'en servaient pour se faire sur la peau des ulcères superficielles."

p. 457

77 (c) ANON.
Point d'argent point de Suisse.
Caricature.

"Les deux derniers tableaux sont des caricatures d'une facture plutôt ennuyeuse et d'un humour bien éculé. La première s'intitule *Point d'argent point de Suisse :* elle représente un alpiniste perdu dans la montagne, secouru par un saint-bernard apparemment porteur d'un tonnelet de rhum réparateur sur lequel est peint une croix rouge. Mais l'alpiniste découvre avec stupeur qu'il n'y a pas de rhum dans le tonnelet: c'est en fait un tronc sous la fente duquel est écrit:Aidez Henri Dunant!"

p. 457

77 (d) ANON.
La Bonne Recette.
Caricature.

"L'autre caricature s'appelle *La Bonne recette*: dans un restaurant à la Dubout un client s'indigne de découvrir dans sa soupe une espèce de lacet. Le maître d'hôtel, tout aussi furieux, a fait appeler le chef afin qu'il s'explique, mais celui-ci se contente de dire en faisant des mines:"tous les cuisiniers ont leurs petites ficelles!"

p. 458

79 (a) MADAME PLATTNER. Australian creative typist.
Untitled: Portrait of Olivia Norv ell and Jeremy Bishop.
Entirely made with a type-writer.

"[...] Madame Plattner, de Brisbane, dactylographe, un dessin représentant les époux, exécuté uniquement avec des caractères de machine à écrire"

p. 471

79 (b) VAN EYCK, Jan and Hubert. (R). Flemish painters and illuminators.
Les Très Riches heures du Duc de Berry.* (R).
Illuminated manuscript.

* Some of these miniatures are attributed to Jan and Hubert Van Eyck

"C'est à Davos, en février 1958, quelques semaines après son quatrième divorce qu'elle [Olivia Rorschash] rencontra Rémi Rorschash, dans des circonstances dignes des classiques comédies américaines. Elle cherchait dans une librairie un livre sur *Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry* [...] [A: Van Eyck] "

p. 472

80 JOHANNOT, Tony. (R). French-German illustrator.
Untitled: Amerigo Vespucci on his deathbed.
Romantic engraving.

"[...] l'âpre controverse qui depuis près de trois siècles s'élevait au sujet d'Améric Vespuce: pour les uns, c'était un homme sincère, un explorateur intègre et scrupuleux qui n'avait jamais pensé avoir un jour l'honneur de baptiser un continent et qui ne le sut jamais ou ne l'aurait appris que sur son lit de mort (et plusieurs gravures romantiques - dont une de Tony Johannot - montrent le vieil explorateur qui s'éteint au milieu des siens, à Seville, en 1512, la main posée sur un atlas ouvert qu'un homme en larmes agenouillé à son chevet lui tend pour qu'il voie de ses yeux une dernière fois avant de mourir le mot AMERICA se déployer en travers du nouveau continent) [...]"

pp. 473-74

82 ANON
Untitled: Man wearing scarlet shantung pyjamas. (F).
Reproduction of engraving on a blotter.

"une gravure de mode montrant un homme vêtu d'*un pyjama de shantung rouge, de babouches en peau de phoque et d'une robe de chambre en cachemire bleu ciel gansée d'argent* [Q: Mathews, Conversions] (NESQUIK on en prendrait bien un deuxième!)."
pp. 487-88.

83 (a) CORMON, Fernand. (R). French painter, 1845-1924.
Chasse à l'auroch.
Sketch.

83 (b) PERUGINO. (R). Italian painter, c. 1445-1523.
Untitled sketch.

"Par exemple, Berthe Danglars défiat son mari de lui rapporter l'étole de vison que portait ce soir-là la duchesse de Beaufour et Maximilien, relevant le pari, exigeait en retour que sa femme se procure le carton de Fernand Cormon (*Chasse à l'auroch*) qui ornait un des salons de leurs hôtes. [...]"
"Ils volerent, entre autre, [...] une esquisse du Pérugin chez le nonce du Pape [...]"
p. 492

83 (c) MARTIBONI. Contemporary Italian artist.*
Untitled.
Multimedia. 200x100x10 cm.

* Possible allusion to Paolo Boni, although the work described does not correspond to any of Boni's works.

"[...] une oeuvre de l'intellectualiste italien Martiboni: c'est un bloc de polystyrène haut de deux mètres, large d'un, épais de dix centimètres, dans lequel sont noyés de vieux corsets mêlés à des piles d'anciens carnets de bal, des fleurs séchées, des *robes de soie usées jusqu'à la corde, des lambeaux de fourrure mangés aux mites, des éventails rongés ressemblant à des pattes de canard dépouillées de leur palmes, des soulier d'argent sans semelles ni talons, des reliefs de festin et deux ou trois petits chiens empaillés.*"[Q: Leiris, Aurora]
p. 499

84 ANON.
La Culebute.
Engraving.

"A droite de l'étagère, il y a sur le mur une gravure toute piquée intitulée *La Culebute*: elle montre cinq bébés nus faisant des galipettes, accompagnée du sizain suivant :

A voir leur soubresauts bouffons
Qui ne diroit que ces Poupons
Auroient bon besoin d'Ellebore;
Leur corps est pourtant bien dressé
Si, selon que dit Pythagore
L'homme est un arbre renversé.

p. 501

86 (a) ANON.
Robinson cherchant à s'installer aussi commodément que possible dans son île solitaire.
Paint on wood.

"La première [oeuvre] est un tableau sur bois, datant sans doute de la première moitié du XIXe siècle. Il s'intitule *Robinson cherchant à s'installer aussi commodément que possible dans son île solitaire.* Au-dessus de ce titre écrit sur deux lignes en petites capitales blanches, on voit, assez naïvement représenté, Robinson Crusoé, bonnet pointu, camisole en poil de chèvre, assis sur une pierre; il trace sur l'arbre qui lui sert à mesurer l'écoulement du temps, une barre de dimanche."

p. 512

86 (b) ANON.
La Lettre volée (A: Poe, The Purloined Letter and D).
Engraving.

86 (c) ANON.
Zerstörung das hübsche Schulmädchen.*
Surrealist Engraving.

* Misprint for Vestörung des hübschen Schulmädchens ("The Pretty Schoolgirl Disturbed"), entered correctly in the German edition with Georges Perec's approval.

"La seconde et la troisième sont deux gravures où deux sujets voisins ont été traités de deux façons différentes: l'une, qui s'intitule énigmatiquement *La Lettre volée*, montre un élégant salon — parquet au point de Hongrie, murs tendus de toile de Jouy — dans lequel une jeune femme assise près d'une fenêtre donnant sur un grand parc, brode un point de bourdon au coin d'un fin drap de lin blanc; non loin d'elle, un homme déjà vieux, à l'air excessivement britannique, joue du virginal. *La seconde gravure, d'inspiration surréaliste, représente une très jeune fille, de quatorze ou quinze ans*

peut-être, vêtue d'une courte combinaison de dentelle. Les baguettes ajourées de ses bas se terminent en fers de lance et à son cou pend une petite croix dont chaque branche est un doigt qui, sous l'ongle, saigne légèrement. Elle est assise devant une machine à coudre, près d'une fenêtre ouverte laissant apercevoir les rocs amoncelés d'un paysage rhénan, et sur la lingerie qu'elle pique se lit cette devise, brodée en caractères gothiques Allemands : [Q: Leiris, Biffures] **Zerstörung das hübsche Shulmädchen"**

p. 512

87 (a) VECELLIO, Groziano. (F). * Pun on:
TITIAN (Tiziano Vecellio). (R). Italian painter, c. 1487-1576.
Descente de croix. (R).1559. **Fig. 81**
Oil on canvas. 148x212 cm.
Musée du Louvre

* Also in "Roussel et Venise" (Cantatrix Sopranonica L, p. 79) and UCDA, 60.

87 (b) MANS, F.H. (R). Dutch Landscape arstist.
L'Arrivée des bateaux de pêche sur une petite plage hollandaise. (R) 1669.(1)
Wood panel. 50x36,5 cm.

87 (c) GAINSBOROUGH, Thomas. (R). English painter, 1727-1788.
Study for the Blue Boy (L'Enfant bleu). (R). (1) **Fig.82**
Paint on cardboard. 40x32 cm.

87 (d) CHARDIN, Jean-Baptiste Siméon. (R). French painter, 1699-1779.
L'Enfant au toton. (R). 1738. **Fig. 83**
Oil on canvas. 67x76 cm.
Musée du Louvre.

87 (e) Le Valet d'Auberge. (R) 1738. **Fig.84**
Oil on canvas. 44x35 cm.
University of Glasgow, Hunterian Collection.

87 (f) LE BAS, Jacques-Philippe* (R) French engraver 1707-1783.
Engraving of the two Chardin's paintings above

* Le Bas reproduced many of Chardin's paintings but does not seem to have engraved the two mentioned by Perec.

87 (g) LAMI, Eugène.(R). French painter, 1800-1890.
Untitled: Mythological scene. (R). (1)
Painting.

87 (h) MONTALESCOT, L.N. (A: Roussel).
L'Ile mystérieuse (A: Verne, L'Ile mystérieuse and Breughel, "Icarus").
Painting.

87 (i) WAINEWRIGHT. English painter, 18th century.
Le Roulier (The Carter).
Watercolour.

(1) Catalogue of the Auction of Raymond Roussel's collection of paintings and art objects, March 1912 (Bibliothèque Nationale, Est. Yd 849 4°). Perec's borrowings from this catalogue have been studied by Magné 1989, 113-30.

"Plusieurs tableaux sont accrochés sur les murs; le plus imposant est pendu à droite de la cheminée ; c'est une *Descente de Croix* du Groziano, sombre et sévère ; à gauche une marine de F. H. Mans, *L'Arrivée des bâteaux de pêche sur une petite plage hollandaise*; sur le mur du fond, au dessus du grand canapé, une étude sur carton pour *L'Enfant bleu* (*"Blue Boy"*) de Thomas Gainsborough, deux grandes gravures de Le Bas reproduisant l'*Enfant au toton* et *Le Valet d'Auberge* de Chardin, [...]; une scène mythologique d'Eugène Lami montrant Bacchus, *Pan et Silène, acompagnés de ribambelles de Satyres, hémipans, aegipans, sylvains, faunes, lémures, lares, farfadets et lutins;* [Q: Rabelais, Livre II] ; un paysage intitulé *"L'Ile mystérieuse"* et signé *L. N. Montalescot* [A: Roussel] *il représente un rivage dont la partie gauche, avec sa plage et sa forêt, offre un abord agréable, mais dont la partie droite, faite de parois rocheuses découpées comme des tours et percées d'une ouverture unique, évoque l'idée d'une forteresse invulnérable*; [A: Breughel: "Icarus"]; et une aquarelle de Wainewright [...] l'aquerelle s'intitule *Le Roulier* (*The Carter*): le roulier est assis sur un banc devant un mur crépi à la chaux. C'est un homme grand et fort, vêtu d'un pantalon de toile bise rentré dans des bottes toutes craquelées, d'une chemise grise au col largement ouvert et d'un foulard bariolé; il porte au poignet droit un bracelet de force en cuir clouté; un sac de tapisserie pend à son épaule gauche; son fouet de corde tressée, dont la mèche terminale s'éparpille en plusieurs filaments rèches, est posé à sa droite, à côté d'une cruche et d'une boule de pain."

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88 (a) MASTON, J.M. (A: Verne, De la Terre à la lune). English painter, early 1900.
L'Apothicaire. (F).
Painting.

88 (b) MASTON, J.M. (A: Verne, De la Terre à la lune). English painter, early 1900.
Le Naturaliste.
Painting. False attribution for:

DE MONTAUT. (R). French illustrator.
Illustration of Verne, De la Terre à la lune. Ed. Hetzel, Ldp, undated, p. 277.
Fig. 85

"Au-dessus de la desserte se trouvent deux tableaux signés de J. T. Maston, un peintre de genre d'origine anglaise qui vécut longtemps en Amérique centrale et connut la notoriété au début du siècle: le premier, intitulé *L'Apothicaire*, représente un homme en redingote verdâtre, chauve, le nez chaussé de lorgnons, le front affligé d'une énorme loupe qui, au fond d'une boutique obscure pleine de grands bocaux cylindriques, semble déchiffrer avec une peine extrême une ordonnance; le second, *le Naturaliste*, montre *un homme maigre, sec, d'une figure énergique, avec une barbe taillée à l'américaine, c'est- à-dire foisonnant sous son menton. Debout, les bras croisés, il regarde se débattre un petit écureuil prisonnier d'une toile d'araignée à mailles serrées, tendue entre deux tulipiers gigantesques, tissée par une bête hideuse, grosse comme un oeuf de pigeon et munie de pattes énormes* [Q: Verne, De la Terre à la lune]."
pp. 532-33

88 (c) DEGAS, Edgar, (R). French painter, 1834-1917.
The Dance Lesson.* (R) 1872. **Fig. 86**
Oil on canvas. 32x46 cm.
Musée d'Orsay

* The painting that corresponds to this chapter in UCDA is Degas, "Danseuses" (UCDA, 78 and 105).

"Elle [Véronique Altamont] examine attentivement une photographie [...] qui représente deux danseuses, dont l'une n'est autre que Madame Altamont plus jeune de vingt-cinq ans: elles font des exercises à la barre sous la direction de leur professeur, un homme maigre, à tête d'oiseau, aux yeux ardents, au cou efflanqué, aux mains osseuses, pieds nus, torse nu, vêtu seulement d'un caleçon long et d'un grand châle tricoté qui lui tombe sur les épaules, et tenant dans sa main gauche une haute canne à pommeau d'argent."
pp. 534-35

91 GERARD, François. (R). French painter, 1770-1837.
Amour et Psyché. (R). 1798.* **Fig. 87**
Canvas. 186x132 cm.
Reproduction on biscuits tin.

* A 1796 version is mentioned in UCDA, 111

"Quelques objets plus identifiables émergent çà et là de ce bric-à-brac; [...] plusieurs boîtes à biscuits, rectangulaires, en métal peint: sur l'une une imitation de l'*Amour et Psyché,* de Gérard [...]"

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92 (a) ROUX, Antoine Père. (R). French seascape artist.
Trois-mâts Henriette.(R).1818. **Fig. 88***
Watercolour.
Reproduction on a table-mat.

* The Bibliothèque Nationale has a colour reproduction of this painting. After 6 months they have still been unable to provide a copy.

"Sur la table, un dessous-de-plat en faïence décorée représentant le trois—mâts *Henriette*, capitaine Louis Guion, rentrant au port de Marseille (d'après une aquarelle originale d'Antoine Roux père, 1818)."

p. 558

92 (b) GREUZE, Jean-Baptiste. (R). French painter, 1725-1805.
L'Accordée de village. (R). 1761. * **Fig. 89**
Oil on canvas. 92x117 cm.
Musée du Louvre.

* The choice of this painting is personal. Any other painting by Greuze may have been used here.

"[...] et deux photograhies dans un double cadre de cuir: l'une montre un vieil évêque donnant sa bague à baiser à une très belle femme vêtue comme une paysanne de Greuze et agenouillée à ses pieds."

p. 558

93 ANON.
Untitled: 21 engravings

"[...] la première, en haut et à gauche, représente des fourmis transportant une grosse miette de pain d'épices; la dernière, en bas à droite, montre une jeune femme accroupie sur une plage de galets, examinant un caillou qui porte une empreinte fossile; les dix-neuf gravures intermédiaires représentent respectivement:

une petite fille enfilant des bouchons de liège pour en faire un rideau;
un poseur de moquette, agenouillé sur le sol, prenant des mesures avec un mètre pliant;
un compositeur famélique écrivant fiévreusement dans une mansarde un opéra dont le titre, *La Vague blanche*, est lisible;
une fille de joie avec des accroche-coeur blond platine en face d'un bourgeois en macfarlane;
trois Indiens du Pérou, assis sur leur talons, le corps presque entièrement caché par leur poncho de bure grise, la tête coiffée de feutres usagés leur tombant sur les yeux, mâchant de la coca;
un homme avec un bonnet de nuit, tout droit sorti du *Chapeau de Paille en Italie*, en train de prendre un bain de pieds à la farine de moutarde tout en feuillettant le compte d'exploitation de la Compagnie ferroviaire du Haut-Dogon pour l'année 1969;
trois femmes dans un tribunal, à la barre des témoins; la première porte *une robe décolletée opale, gants ivoire douze boutons, pelisse ouatinée garnie de zibeline, peigne de brillants et touffe d'aigrettes dans les cheveux; la seconde: toque et manteau de lapin-loutre, col relevé jusqu'au menton, regard scrutateur à travers un face-à-main d'écaille; la troisième: costume d'amazone, tricorne, bottes à éperons, gilet, gants mousquetaire suède avec baguettes brodées, longue traîne sur le bras et fouet de chasse* [Q: Joyce, Ulysses];
un portrait d'Etienne Cabet, fondateur du journal *le Populaire* et auteur du *Voyage en Icarie,* qui tenta sans succès d'établir une colonie communiste en Iowa avant de mourir en 1856;
deux hommes en frac, assis à une table frêle, et jouant aux cartes; un examen attentif montrerait que sur ces cartes sont reproduites les mêmes scènes que celles qui figurent sur les gravures;
une sorte de diable à longue queue hissant au sommet d'une échelle un large plateau rond couvert de mortier [A: Bosch, "Hay Wagon"];
un brigand albanais aux pieds d'une vamp drapée dans un kimono blanc à pois noirs [A: D];
un ouvrier juché au sommet d'un échafaudage, nettoyant un grand lustre de cristal;
un astrologue coiffé d'un chapeau pointu, avec une longue robe noire constellée d'étoiles en papier d'argent, feignant de regarder en l'air à travers un cylindre manifestement creux;
un corps de ballet faisant la révérence devant un souverain en uniforme de colonel de hussards, dolman blanc brodé de fils d'argent et sabretache en poils de sanglier;
le physiologiste Claude Bernard recevant de ses élèves, à l'occasion de son quarante-septième anniversaire, une montre en or;
un commissionaire en blouse, avec ses sangles de cuir et sa plaque réglementaire, apportant deux malles-cabines;
une vieille dame, vêtue à la mode des années 1880, coiffe de dentelle, mains gantées de mitaines, proposant de belles pommes grises sur une grande claie d'osier ovale;
un aquarelliste ayant posé son chevalet sur un petit pont, au-dessus d'un étroit chenal bordé de cabanes de bouchoteurs;
un mendiant mutilé proposant à l'unique consommateur de la terrasse d'un café un horoscope de pacotille: un imprimé en tête duquel est figuré sous le titre «Le Lilas» une branche de lilas servant de fond à deux cercles, dont l'un circonscrit un bélier et l'autre un croissant lunaire aux pointes tournées vers la droite."

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95 (a) PERPIGNANI. Draftsman
La Danseuse aux pièces d'or.
Drawing

95 (b) DUFAY, Florentin. School of Delacroix.
Copy of :

95 (c) DELACROIX, Eugène. (R). French painter, 1798-1863.
L'Entrée des Croisés à Constantinople. (R). 1841. **Fig. 90**
Oil on canvas. 411x497 cm.
Musée du Louvre.

95 (d) ANON.
Untitled: Landscape.
After the taste of Hubert Robert.

95 (e) ROBERT, Hubert. (R). French painter, 1733-1808.
La Source au temple Vesta. (R). **Fig. 91**
Paint on canvas. 245x120 cm.
Catalogue of Raymond Roussel's auction, 1912 , p. 37

95 (f) DUCREUX, Joseph. (R). French painter,1735-1802.
Le joueur éploré ou le déespoir.* (R) 1791. **Fig. 92**
Drawing.
British Museum, London.

* could correspond to Beppo's portrait even if the pose is not the same

95 (g) DUMONT, François. (R). French painter, 1751-1831.
Louis Guéné, violon du Roi. (R). 1791. **Fig.93**
Miniature on ivory.
Musée du Louvre.

"Le premier dessin, signé Perpignani, s'intitulait *La Danseuse aux pièces d'or:* la danseuse, une Berbère aux vêtements bariolés, un tatouage en forme de serpent sur l'avant-bras droit, danse au milieu des pièces d'or que lui jette la foule qui l'entoure;

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le second était une copie méticuleuse de *L'Entrée des Croisés à Constantinople,* signée d'un certain Florentin Dufay dont on sait qu'il fréquenta quelque temps l'atelier de Delacroix mais ne laissa que très peu d'oeuvres;

pp. 572-73

le troisième était un grand paysage dans le goût d'Hubert Robert: *au fond des ruines romaines; au premier plan, à droite, des jeunes filles dont l'une porte sur la tête un grand panier presque plat* rempli d'agrumes; [A: Catalogue Roussel]

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le quatrième enfin était une étude au pastel de Joseph Ducreux pour le portrait du violoniste Beppo. Ce virtuose italien dont la popularité resta vive pendant la période révolutionnaire ("Ze zouerai du violone" répondit-il quand, sous la Terreur, on lui demanda comment il comptait servir la Nation), était arrivé en France au début du règne de Louis XVI. Il ambitionnait alors d'être nommé Violon du Roi, mais ce fut Louis Guéné qui fut choisi. Dévoré par la jalousie, Beppo rêvait d'éclipser en tout son rival: ayant appris que François Dumont venait de peindre une miniature sur ivoire représentant Guené, Beppo se précipita chez Joseph Ducreux et lui commanda son portrait. Le peintre accepta, mais il apparut bientôt que le fougueux instrumentiste était incapable de garder la pose plus de quelques secondes; le miniaturiste, après avoir vainement tenté de travailler en présence de ce modèle volubile et excité qui l'interrompait à tout instant, préféra bientôt renoncer, et il ne reste de la commande que cette esquisse préparatoire où Beppo, debraillé, les yeux au ciel, le violon bien en main, l'archet prêt à attaquer, s'efforce apparemment d'avoir l'air encore plus inspiré que son ennemi."

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96 BIDOU.
Untitled: Young girl lying in a meadow.
Painting.

"Au-dessus du lit est accroché un tableau signé D. Bidou: il représente une toute jeune fille, allongée à plat ventre dans une prairie, elle écosse des petits pois; a côté d'elle un petit chien, un briquet d'Artois aux longues oreilles et au museau allongé, est sagement assis, la langue pendant, le regard bon."

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97 (a) COLLECTIVE.
<u>L'Homme aux semelles devant</u>.

"[...] il [Vladislav] étala sur le parquet un grand rouleau de toile vierge, la fixa avec une vingtaine de clous hâtivement plantés et invita l'assemblée à la piétiner de concert. Le résultat, dont le gris imprécis n'étaient pas sans rappeler les "diffuse grays" de la dernière période de Laurence Hapi, fut immédiatement baptisé *L'Homme aux semelles devant.*"

p. 583

97 (b) COLLECTIVE.
Untitled.

"Une immense toile avait été agrafée sur les trois murs de la grande pièce (une haute verrière constituant le quatrième mur) et plusieurs dizaines de seaux, dans lesquels trempaient de grosses brosses de peintres en bâtiment, étaient disposé s au centre de la pièce. Obéissant aux instructions de Vladislav, les invités s'alignerènt le long de la verrière et, au signal qu'il leur donna, se précipitèrent sur les pots, empoignèrent les brosses et allèrent en étaler le plus rapidement possible le contenu sur la toile. L'oeuvre produite fut jugée intéressante, mais n'entraîna pas vraiment l'adhésion unanime de ses créateurs improvisés [...]"

pp. 583-84

97 (c) HUTTING, Franz. (F). French-American contemporary artist.
"EURIDYCE". (F). 1960s.
Unfinished painting.

"La toile représente une pièce vide, peinte en gris, pratiquement sans meubles. Au centre un bureau d'un gris métallique sur lequel sont disposés un sac à main, une bouteille de lait, un agenda et un livre ouvert sur les deux portraits de Racine et de Shakespeare. Sur le mur du fond un tableau représentant un paysage avec un coucher de soleil [A: Breughel: "Icarus"]. A côté, une porte à demi ouverte, par laquelle on devine qu'Eurydice, il y un instant, vient de disparaître à jamais."

pp. 585-86

98 ANON.
Untitled: Children playing dice. (F).
Engraving.

"Le second [objet], au-dessus du lit, est une grande gravure rectangulaire dans un cadre de cuir vert bouteille : elle représente une petite place au bord de la mer : *deux enfants sont assis sur le mur du quai et jouent aux dés. Un homme lit son journal sur les marches d'un monument, dans l'ombre du héros qui brandit son sabre. Une jeune fille remplit son seau à la fontaine. Un marchand de fruits est couché près de sa balance. Au fond d'un cabaret, par la porte béante et les fenêtres grandes ouvertes, on voit deux hommes attablés devant une bouteille de vin* [Q: Kafka, Le Chasseur Gracchus]".

p. 595

99 (a) BARTLEBOOTH, Percival. (F). English Watercolour artist, 1900-75.
Untitled: Maiandros.
Watercolour.

"Il représente un petit port des Dardanelles près de l'embouchure de ce fleuve que les Anciens appelaient Maiandros, le Méandre.
La côte est une bande de sable, crayeuse, aride, plantée de genêts rares et d'arbres nains; au premier plan, à gauche, elle s'évase en une crique encombrée de dizaines et de dizaines de barques aux coques noires dont les mâtures grêles s'enchevêtrent en un inextricable réseau de verticales et d'obliques. Derrière, comme autant de taches colorées, *des vignes, des pépinières, des jaunes champs de moutarde, de noirs jardins de magnolias, de rouges carrières de pierre s'étagent au flanc de côteaux peu abrupts* [Q: Calvino, "Dall'opaco"]. Au delà, sur toute la partie droite de l'aquarelle, loin déjà à l'intérieur des terres, les ruines d'une cité antique apparaissent avec une précision surprenante: miraculeusement conservé pendant des siècles et des siècles sous les couches d'alluvions charriées par le fleuve sinuex, le dallage de marbre et de pierre taillée des rues, des demeures et des temples, récemment mis à jour, dessine sur le sol même une exacte empreinte de la ville: c'est un entrecroisement de ruelles d'une étroitesse extrême, plan, à l'échelle, d'un labyrinthe exemplaire fait d'impasses, d'arrière-cours, de carrefours, de chemins de traverse, enserrant les vestiges d'une acropole vaste et somptueuse bordée de restes de colonne, d'arcades effondrées, d'escaliers béants ouvrant sur des terrasses affaisées, comme si, au coeur de ce dédale presque déjà fossile, cette esplanade insoupçonnable avait été dissimulée exprès, à l'image de c*es palais de contes orientaux où l'on mène la nuit un personnage qui, reconduit chez lui avant le jour, ne doit pas pouvoir retrouver la demeure magique où il finit par croire qu'il n'est allé qu'en rêve* [Q: Proust, Temps retrouvé]. Un ciel violent, crépusculaire, traversé de nuages rouge sombre, surplombe ce paysage immobile et écrasé d'où toute vie semble avoir été bannie."

pp. 596-97

99 (b) ANON.
Untitled: The Ems Telegrams.
Popular woodcut (image d'Epinal).

99 (c) ANON.
Napoléon inspecting the Oberkampf manufactory.
Popular woodcut (image d'Epinal).

"[...] et deux images d'Epinal, représentant, l'une Napoléon Ier visitant en 1806 la manufacture d'Oberkampf et détachant sa propre croix de la Légion d'honneur pour l'épingler sur la poitrine du filateur, l'autre une version peu scupuleuse de *La Depêche d'Ems* où l'artiste, rassemblant dans un même décor, au mepris de toute vraisemblance, les principaux protagonistes de l'affaire, montre Bismarck, ses molosses couchés à ses pieds, tailladant à coups de ciseaux le message que lui a remis le conseiller Abeken, cependant qu'à l'autre bout de la pièce l'Empereur Guillaume Ier, un sourire insolent aux lèvres, signifie à l'Ambassadeur Benedetti, lequel baisse la tête sous l'affront, que l'audience qu'il lui a accordée vient de prendre fin."

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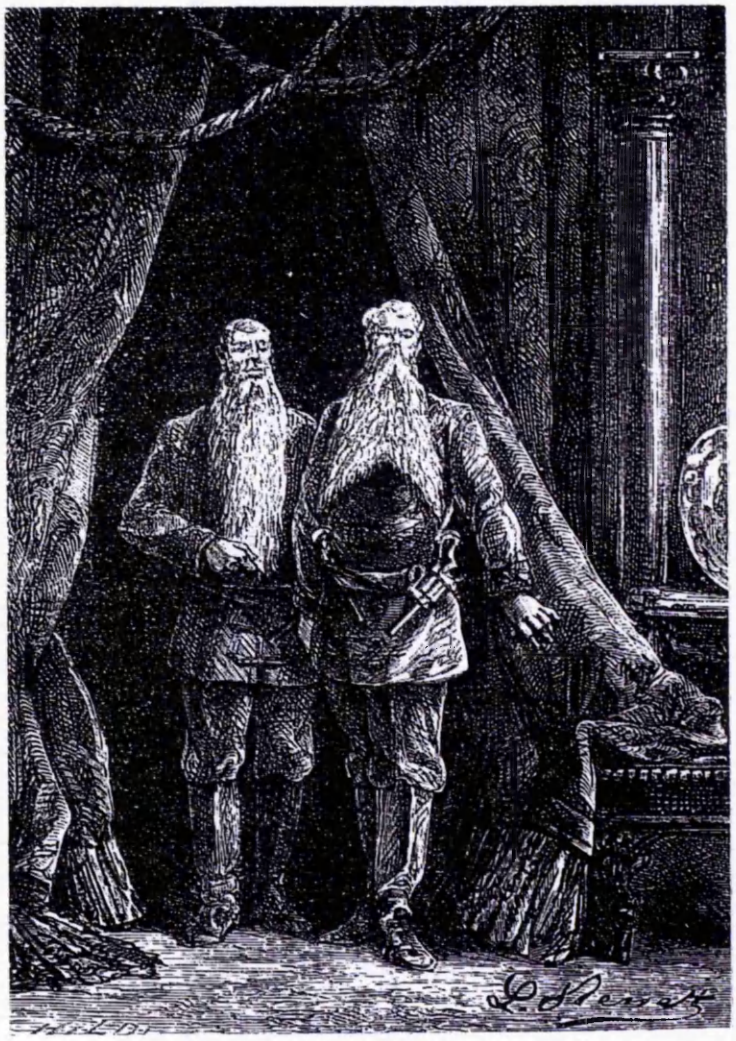
An iconographical guide

(The number in brackets refers to the "Catalogue of art works in Vme", pp.249-299)

Fig. 54 (6b)

Fig. 55 (8)



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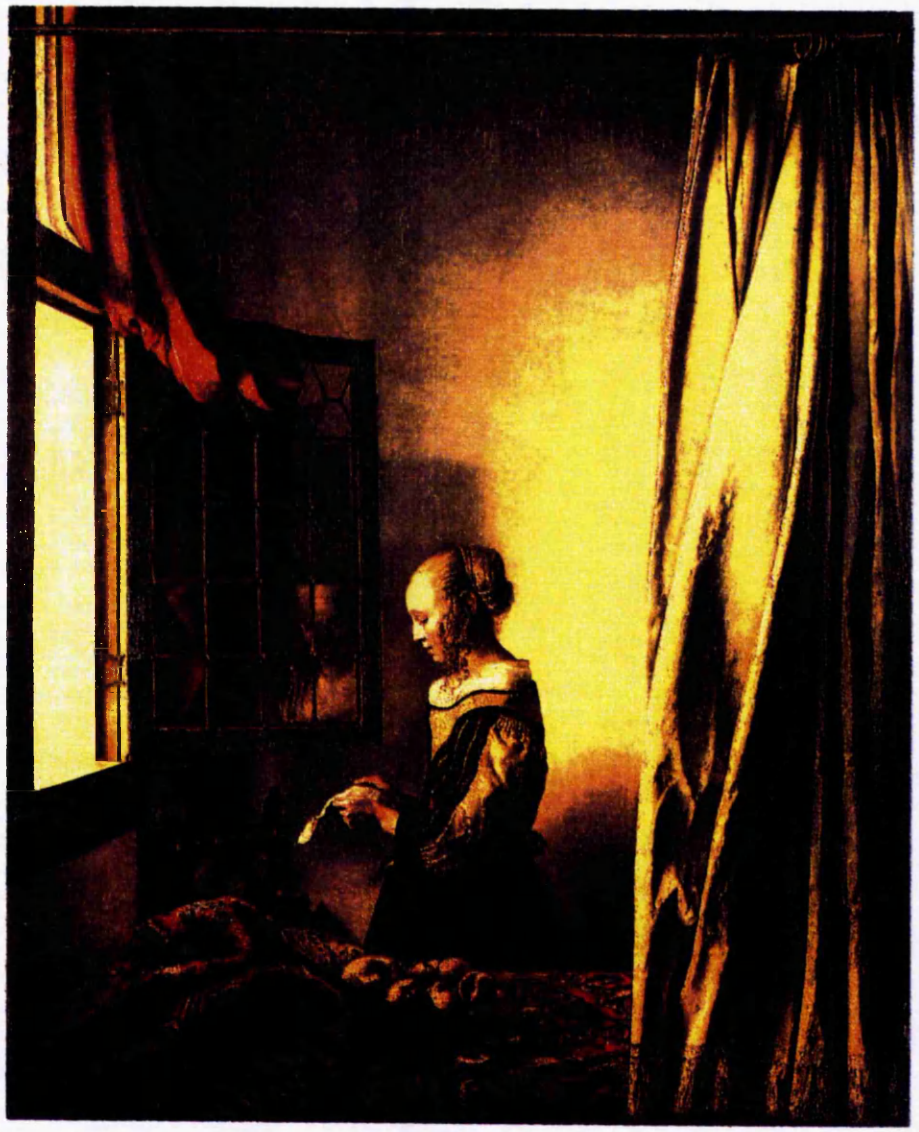

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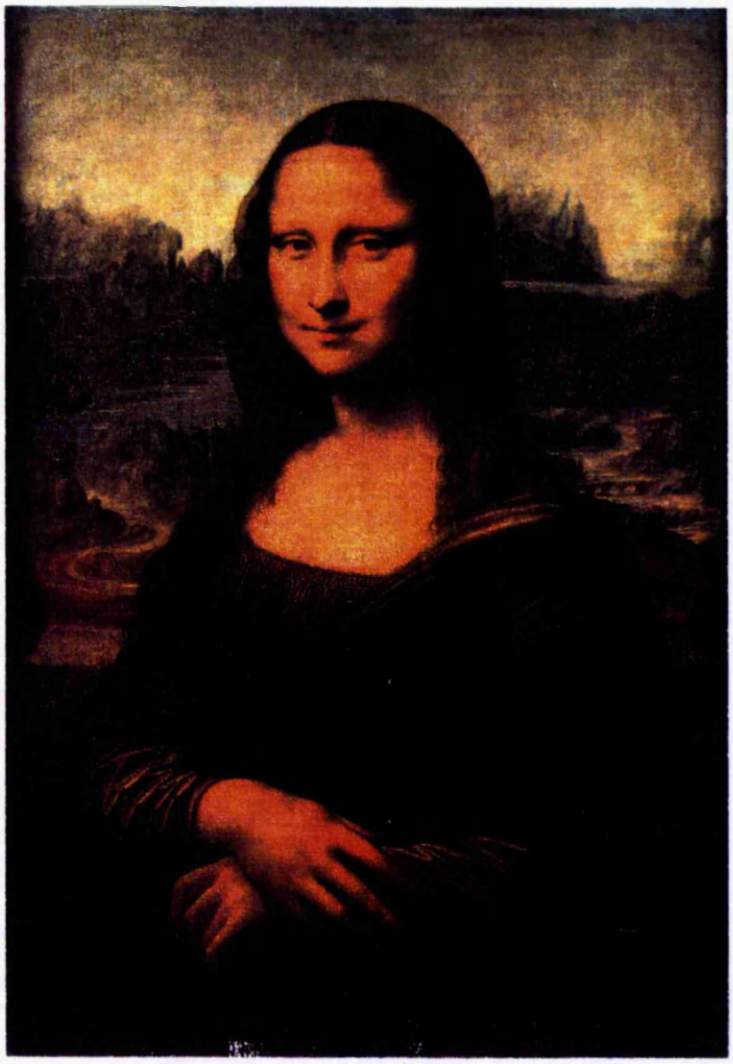


Fig. 58 (11b)

Fig. 59 (11 c)

Fig. 60 (11 d)

Fig. 61 (11e)

Fig. 62 (11f)

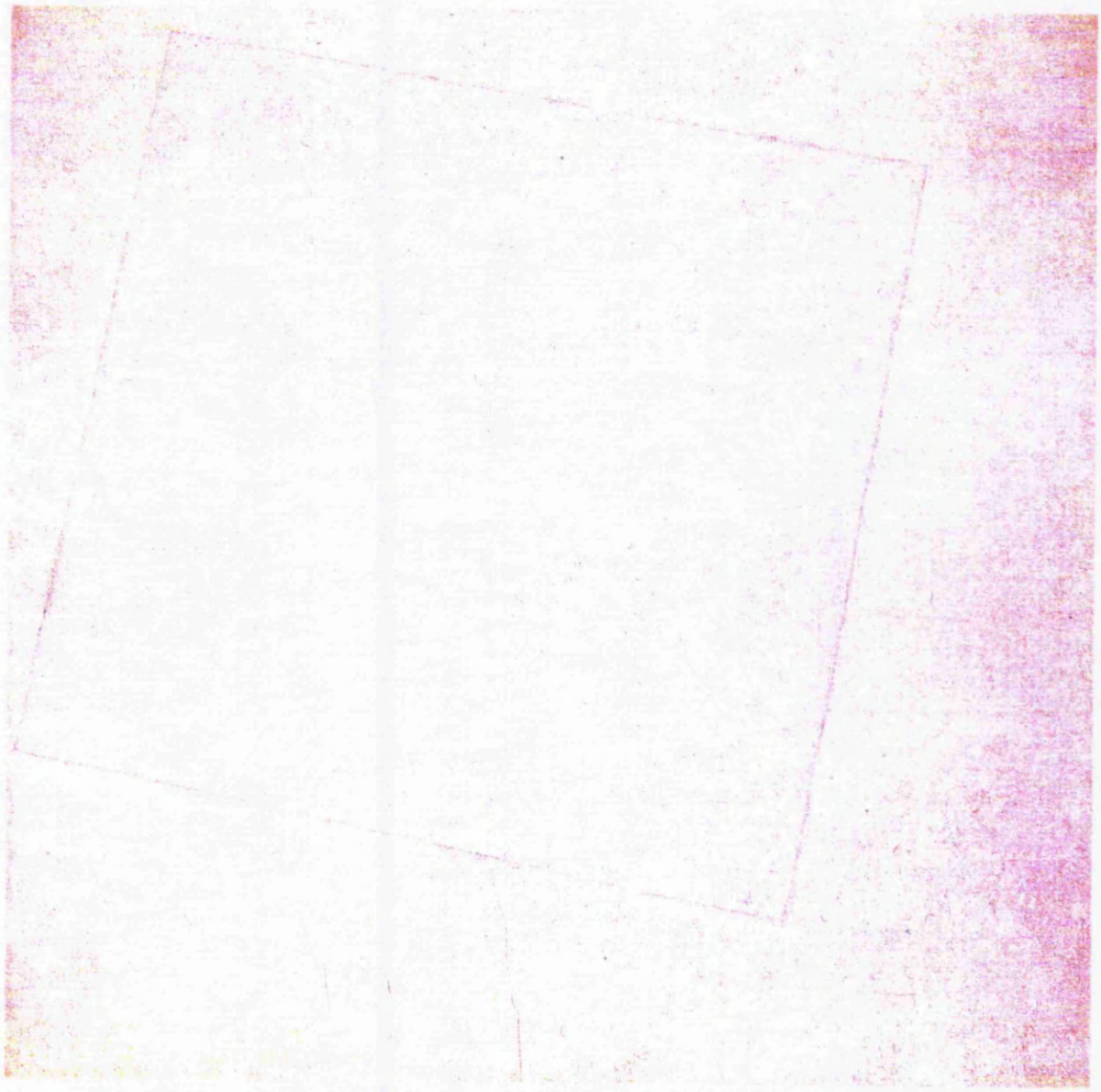


Fig. 63 (11g)

Fig. 64 (11i)

Fig. 65 (23)

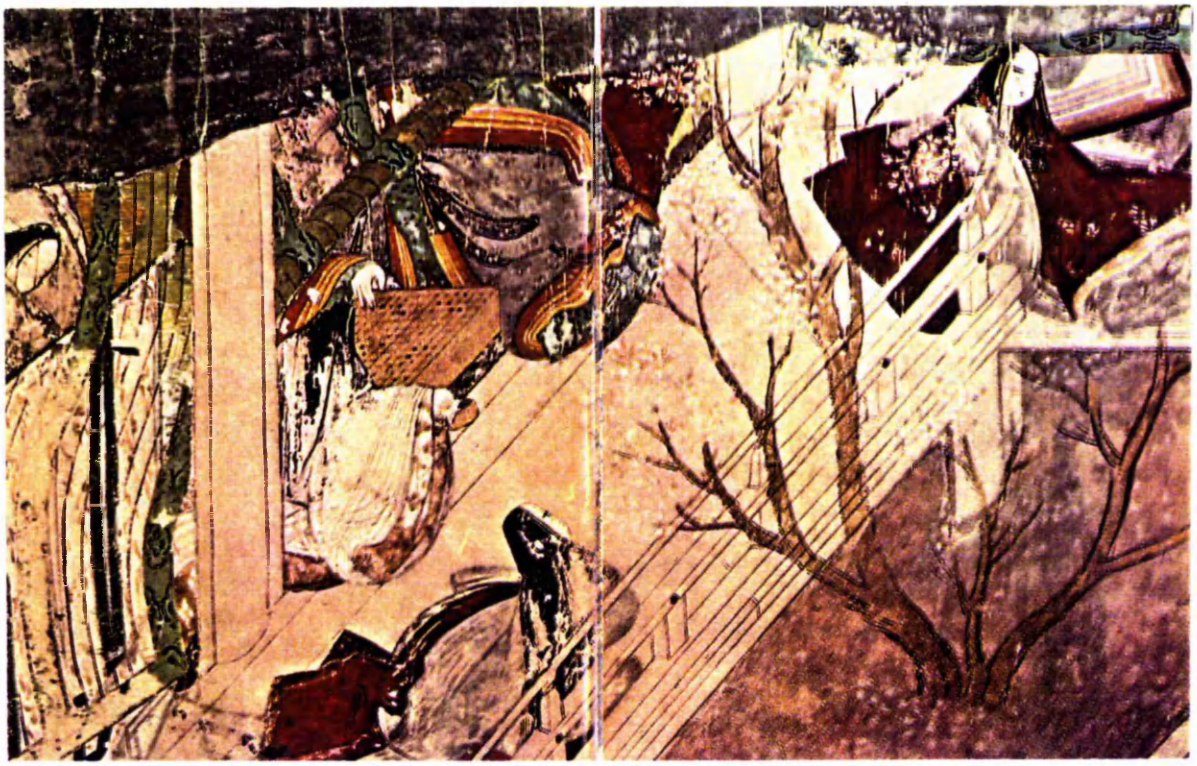
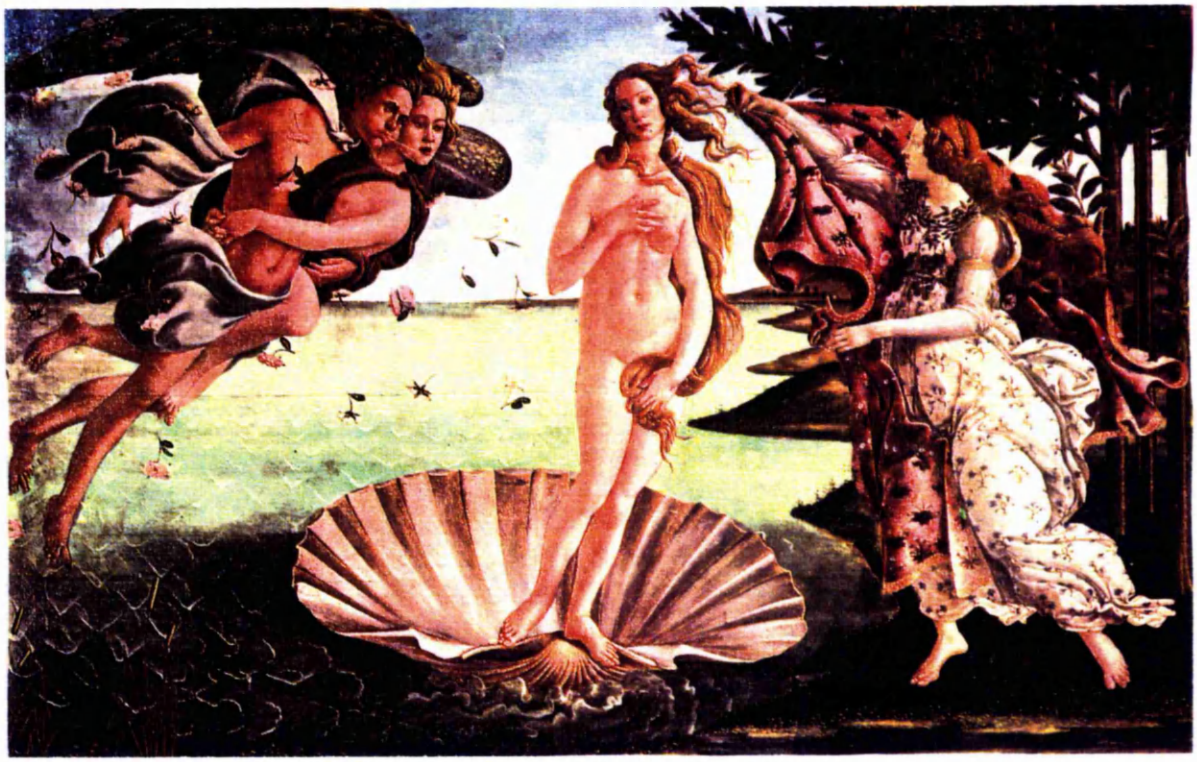


Fig. 66 (24a)

Fig. 67 (29b)

Fig. 68 (32b)



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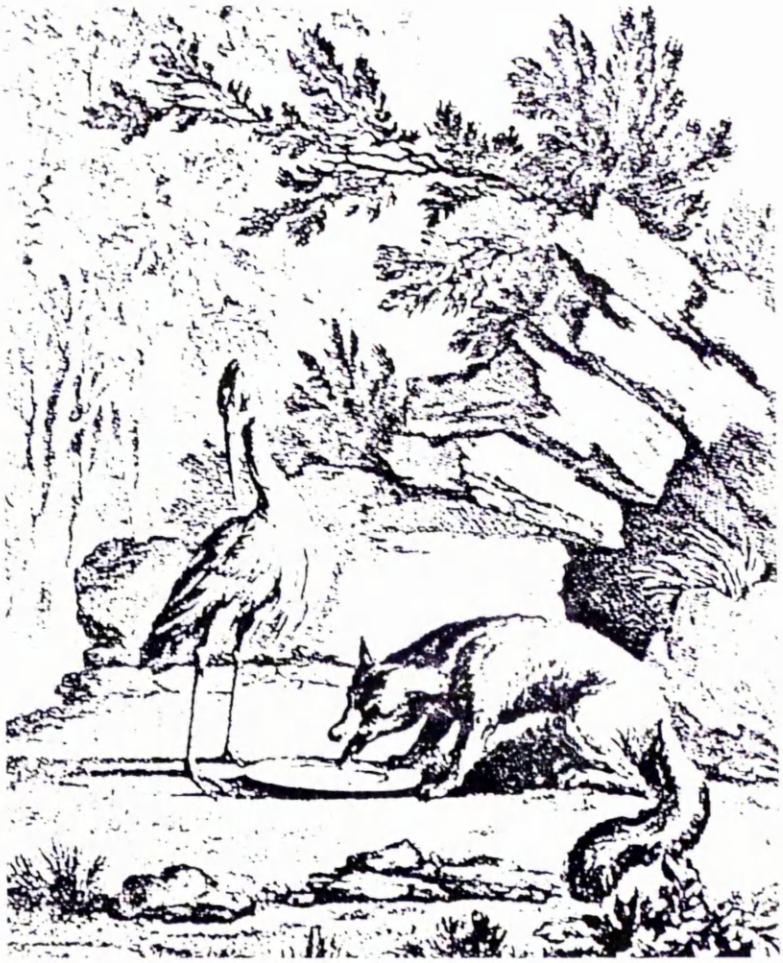


Fig. 70 (45a)

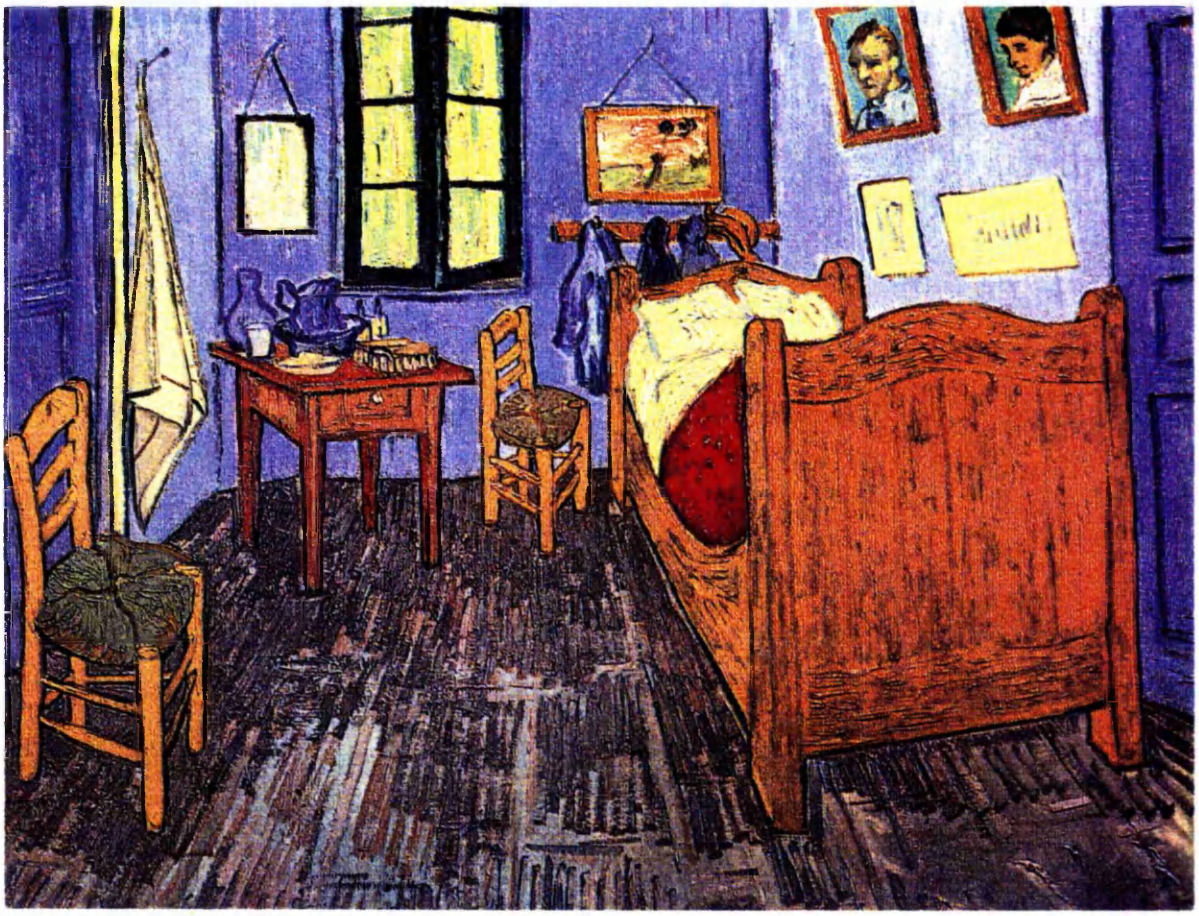


Fig. 71 (45c)

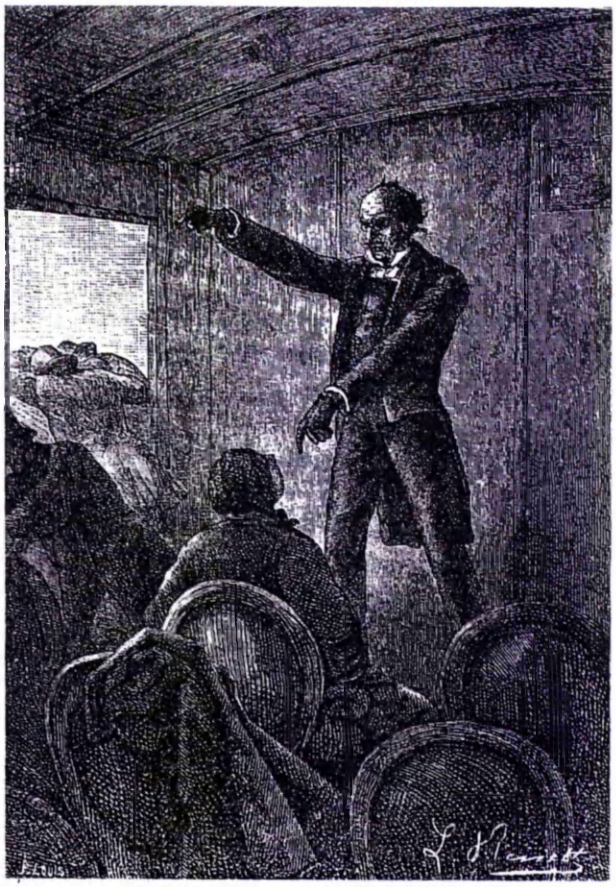
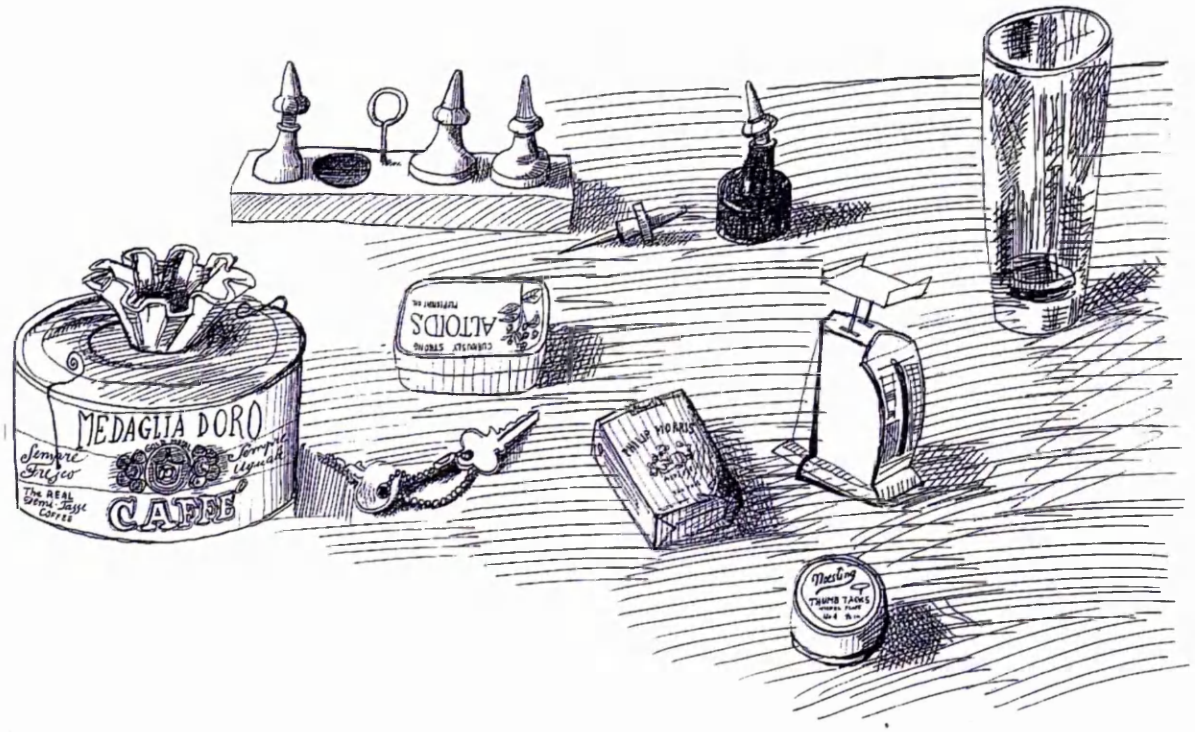


Fig. 72 (45e)

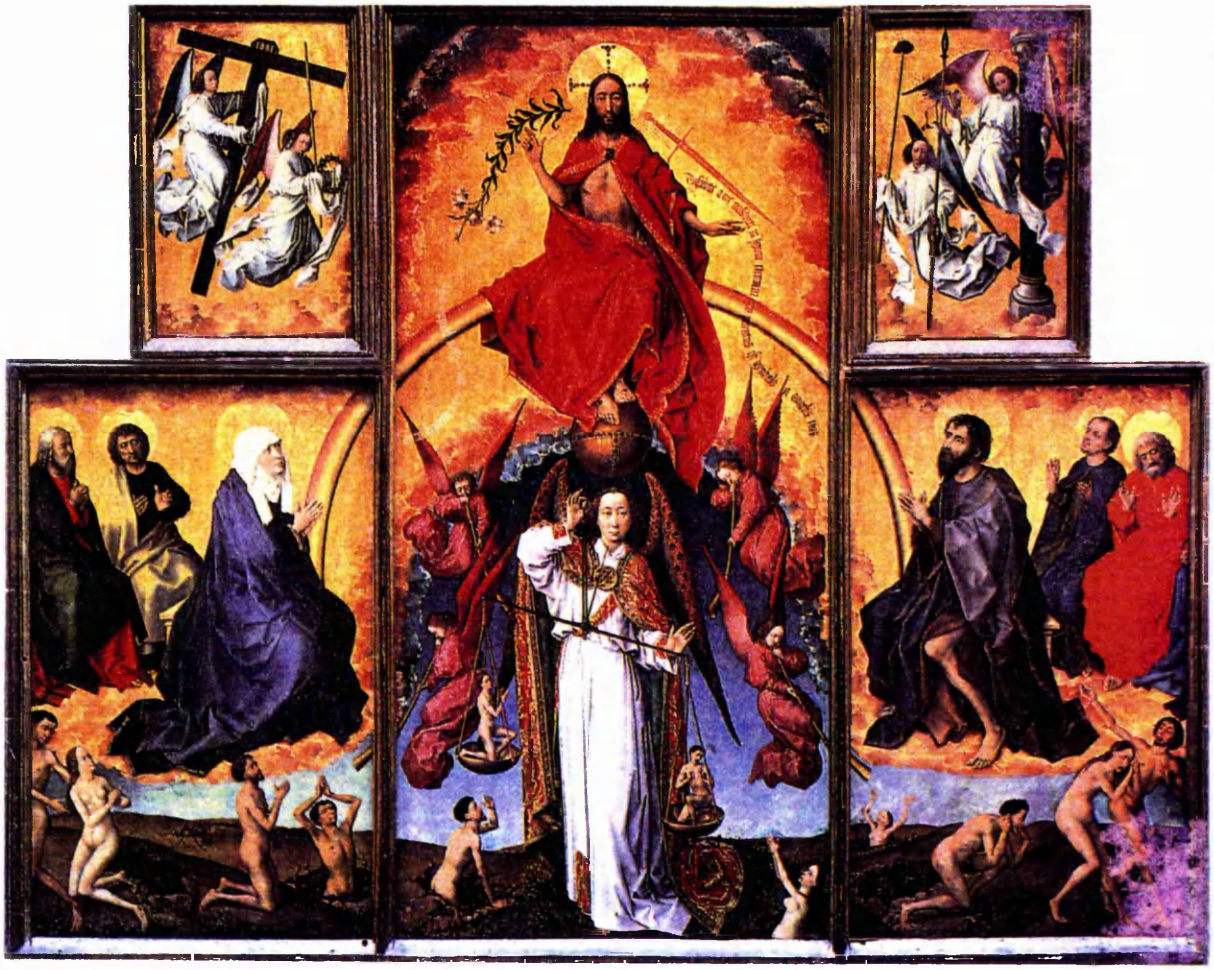
Fig. 73 (47a)

Fig. 74 (52)



From The Passport © 1954

Fig. 75 (53c)



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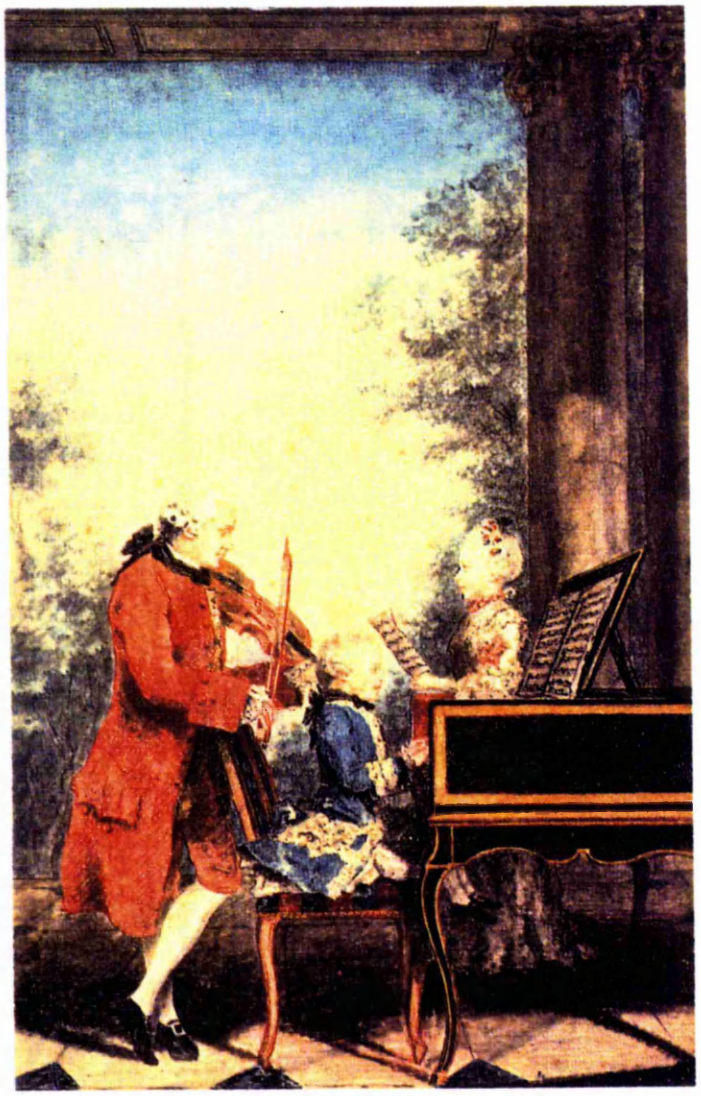

Fig. 77 (66c)

Fig. 78 (70b)

Fig. 79 (71a)

Fig. 80 (72)

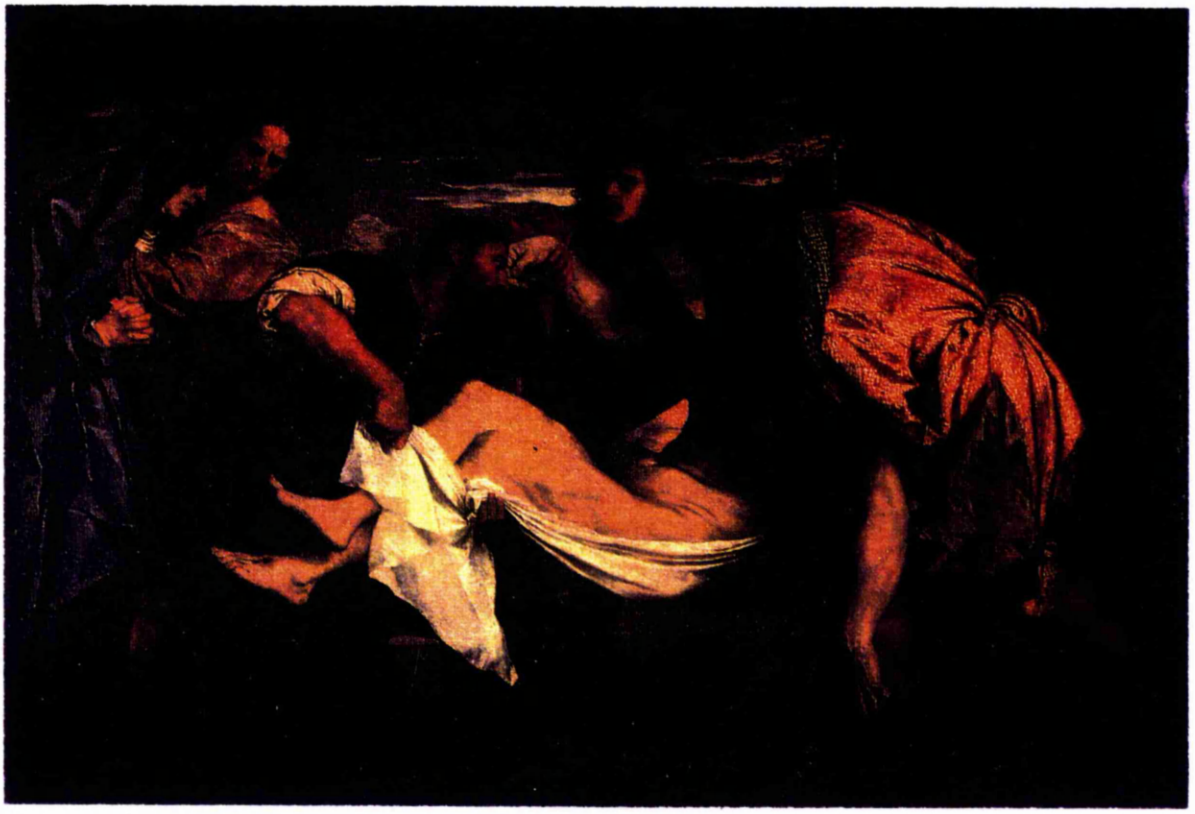

Fig. 81 (87a)

Fig. 82 (87c)

Fig. 83 (87d)

Fig. 84 (87e)

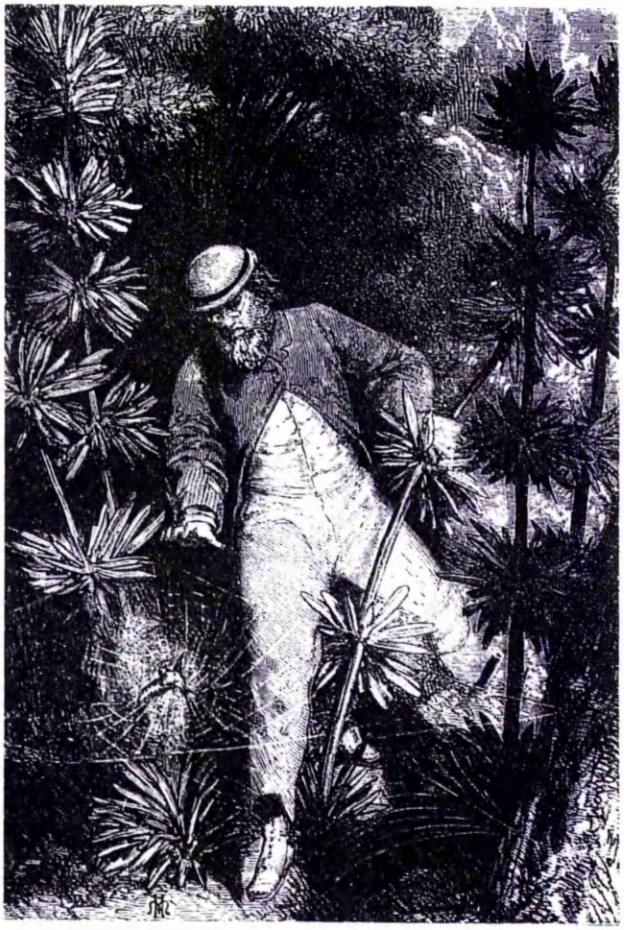

Fig. 85 (88b)

Fig. 86 (88c)

Fig. 87 (91)

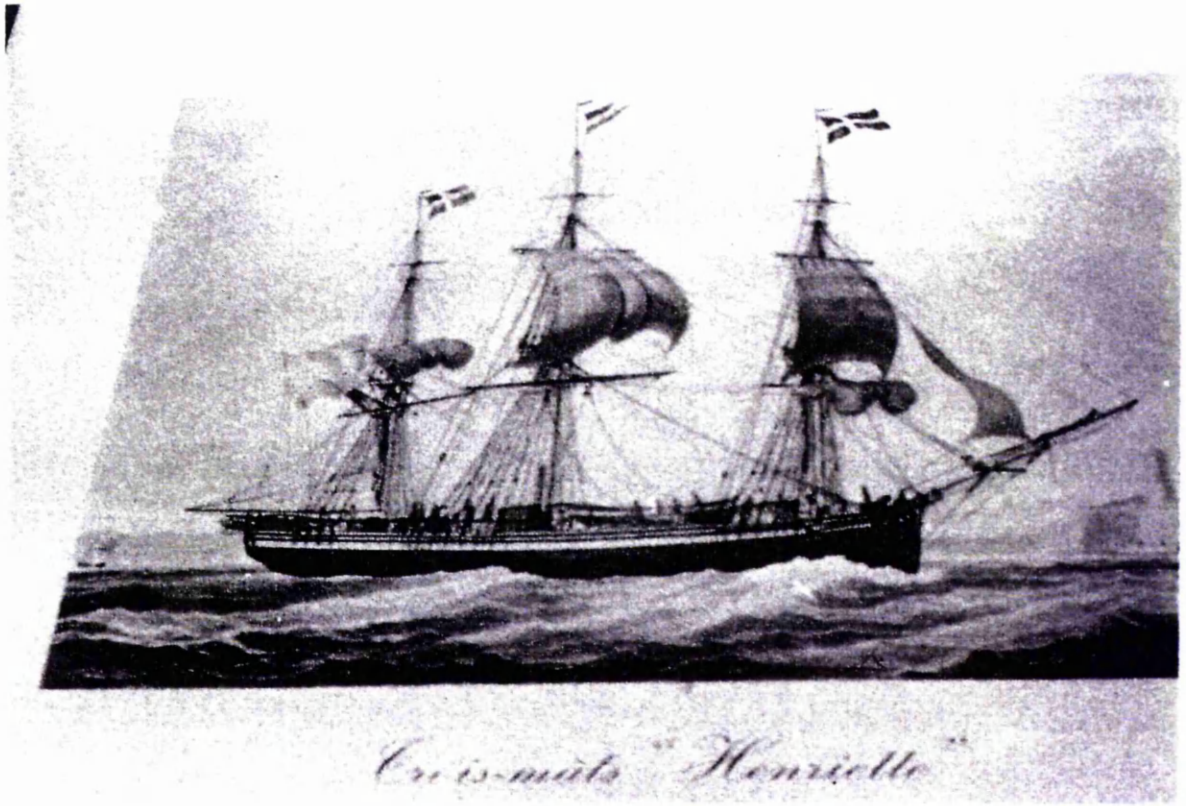

Fig. 88 (92a)

Fig. 89 (92b)

Fig. 90 (95c)

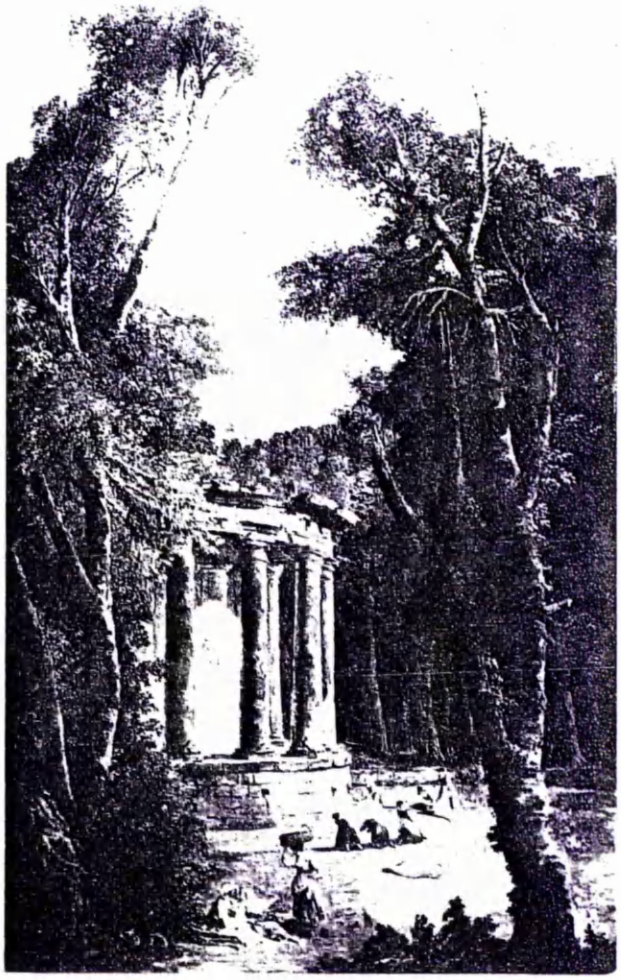

Fig. 91 (95e)

Invented & Engraved by P. Lucreux Painter to the King of France
to His Imperial Majesty & Principal Painter to the Duke of France

London Published by the Author

Fig. 92 (95f)

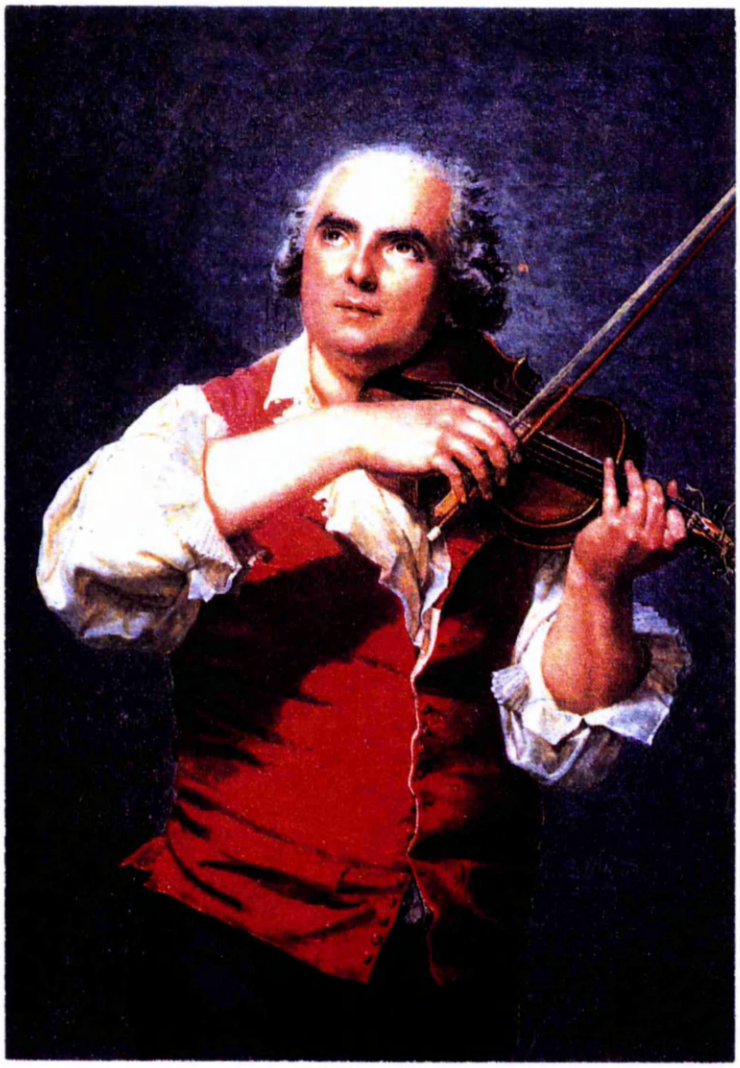

Fig. 93 (95g)

Notes

Introduction

(1) Only two studies of this text exist at present: David Bellos, 1992 and GPLW, 1993, but they do not present the novel from a specifically "painterly" viewpoint.

(2) For Pierre Getzler, Paolo Boni, Cuchi White, France Mitrofanoff, Claude Berge, Jacques Poli, Peter Stämpfli, Hans Dahlem, Fabrizio Clerici and others. Full bibliographical references are given in the Bibliography.

(3) Perec's collaboration with artists is discussed in more detail in Molteni 1992. This is the only presentation to date of the artists' work in relation to Perec's writing. Bernard Magné discusses some of the heterograms written by Perec to accompany art works but from a textualist point of view (Magné 1992).

(4) "Painterly" is intended here to refer to concepts and techniques which are found in art forms such as painting and drawing. It does not refer to the distinction, introduced by Heinrich Wölfflin, between "linear" and "painterly" art forms. The term is used in this sense later on in the present work, with suitable reference to its source.

Chapter 1

(1) Saul Steinberg, The Art of Living, 1949. This source, as well as the Genji Monogatari Emaki and Le Sage, is acknowledged in Eses (58-61). In an interview Perec also mentions the Flemish tradition of Cabinet Pictures and a catalogue for Victorian dolls' houses (perhaps the Victoria and Albert Museum catalogue, 1978) (GC 1978, 73).

(2) To quote but a few: Antonello's "Saint Jerome in his Study" (Eses, 117-18), "Jésus en face des docteurs" (Wse, 23-24), or the many descriptions of paintings in Vme (discussed in Chapter 4 below).

(3) Conversation with Gérard Guyomard, 10 January 1989, Rue des Petits Carreaux, Paris.

(4) Interview for the launch of The New World (1965), quoted in Butor 1966, unpaged. This statement is often used by art critics: see, for example, The Americans (Musées Royaux des Beaux Arts, Belgium, 1967).

(5) Roland Barthes (1964, 34) uses this point in an analysis of Robbe-Grillet's writing.

(6) In a pastiche article of Raymond Roussel ("Roussel et Venise", 1977), Perec and Mathews define the process of incorporation as the product of melancholy and grief. Whereas "introjection" consists of a metaphorisation of the world, incorporation takes the literal and "objective" meaning of things.

Chapter 2

(1) David Bellos accounts for this period in the chapter entitled "Coherence and Paul Klee", (GPLW, Ch. 20, 201-213). It should also be noted that, in Le Condottiere, the meeting between Jérôme and Gaspard takes place in Berne and that some of the story is set in the Bernese Oberland, perhaps in homage to Klee.

(2) Perec's reflections on realism in the late 1950s and early 1960s evolve around Lukács as well as Klee. However, to discuss the question of realism in art and literature would require a lengthy and detailed analysis which would go far beyond the scope of the present thesis. The discussion will therefore be limited to Klee's influence on Perec's thoughts on realism.

(3) The same question is put in the texts written for Cause Commune (including Eses) and is formulated more or less explicitly in most works from Le Condottiere onwards.

(4) The joke was invented by Alain Guérin (information from David Bellos).

(5) In a text written for Le Nouvel Observateur ("Le Rêve et le texte"), Perec talks about a project of "indirect" autobiography: not the autobiography written in the first person but a number of memories classed in thematic order (Jsn, 75). Paul Virilio mentions this aspect in an interview with Andrea Borsari (Virilio 1991, 270).

(6) Calvino's distinction between the "written and the unwritten world" may help to explain this point (even though it is formulated at the end of Perec's writing career). Calvino distinguishes between an incomprehensible and frightening reality (the "unwritten world") and a more reassuring world, mediated by literature (the "written world"). See Calvino 1983.

(7) On this aspect, see the introduction to the Pedagogical Sketchbooks by Moholy-Nagy (1953).

(8) It may be argued that when the description becomes the over-exhaustive accumulation of details, it becomes hyperrealistic and verges on the unreal (see below, pp. 203-204 and 209).

(9) Pierre Getzler uses this idea of the complexity of the real to construct paintings in which space and perspective are created by the juxtaposition of objects that influence and transform each other. It is to this idea that he credits the multiplicity of interpretations that may be given to any one of Perec's works, the "truth" being the sum of all the possible interpretations.

(10) Svevo is quoted by Perec in L.G., 55-56, and in the preparatory notes for Wse, CGP2, 161.

(11) This special "way of looking" is mentioned in more detail in Molteni 1993.

(12) Between 1948 and 1959 several books on forgery were published in France: Kurz 1948; Demeure 1951; Mendax 1953; Isnard 1955 and 1959; Cole 1958. Two exhibitions were held in Paris in 1954 and 1955 (respectively at 214 rue du Faubourg Saint Honoré - "Le Musée du faux artistique", 13-27.2.1954 - and at the Grand Palais - "Le Faux dans l'art et dans l'histoire", 17.6-16.7.1955) which received 1500 press reviews and 18 radio and television programmes (Isnard 1955, 65). Commentators were mainly concerned with finding more effective ways of detecting and preventing this "crime" (in particular Kurz, who focuses on the scientific methods of prevention and Isnard, a chief constable who devoted his life to counterfeit prevention). Full references are given in the Bibliography.

(13) In an earlier unfinished and now lost text, La Cassette (1958), the hero is a forger who tries to reproduce a casket. This would represent the first and easiest stage of forgery. Gaspard pas mort, a previous version of Le Condottiere, seems to work at the beginning in the same direction (alternative known titles are "Le Coffre" and "Le Répétiteur" - an image that is taken up again in Le Condottiere). In a later version of Gaspard pas mort, the main character has to make a pseudo-Giotto, a puzzle forgery in the manner of Van Meegeren's Vermeers (mentioned in Bellos, GPLW, 193-194 and 204).

(14) Isnard's Musée du faux artistique (1980), which takes up in iconographical form his previous books on forgery (1955 and 1959), shows a reproduction of a pseudo-Holbein made from elements from Holbein's "Portraits of Antoine Le Bon" in Berlin and his "Portrait of a Man" in Vienna and a false "Portrait of a Man" by Memling (Fig. 7-10), which carries the following legend: "l'expression du caractère est sacrifiée à celle d'une piété, d'une tenue morale, d'une fierté d'époque" (Isnard, 1980, 66).

(15) In a letter to Lederer, Perec wrote "La falsification ou la substitution (cherche pas à piger)" (Corr. Lederer, 13 February 1958, quoted in Bellos, GPLW, 194).

(16) According to Pierre Getzler Perec had reproductions of Cranach's "Melanchton" and of Chardin's "Self-portrait" in his collection of portraits.

(17) David Bellos has pointed out that Perec's identification with the "Condottiere" on the basis of the similarity of their scars (Wse, 142) is a fictional elaboration on Perec's part since the scar does not play an important role in Le Condottiere (Bellos, 1992b, 59). If there are some references to the scar, Perec's attention is focused mainly on the eyes.

(18) According to Pierre Getzler, Perec must have read Thomas de Quincey's Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts (re-published in France in 1959), famous for first exploring the artistic value of crime. The theme of parricide is very present in this book (Cain, the bad son, and Brutus are considered as real artists).

(19) Burgelin's essay on "Perec et la cruauté" (1985) analyses some instances of conflictual relationships between life as an artist and paternity, or simply between paternity and filiation. The confict is resolved, in Perec, with writing (the often quoted sentence taken from Wse, 59).

(20) Perec's close friends have confirmed that as a young man he read attentively all of Paris's contemporary publications (information from David Bellos).

(21) In Lukács's theory this would make of Hamlet a true epic work (Luckács 1920).

(22) It is in fact a faux: the allusion to Carpaccio's "Saint Ursula" is replaced in chapter XXII by "Saint George and the Dragon".

(23) In the film of UHQD (but not in the text), and in the chapter of Vme which corresponds to UHQD (Ch. LII) there is a reproduction of "Le Condottiere" in the character's room.

(24) The sources for Antonello's life and technique are probably Rudel (Techniques de la peinture, 1950) which explains in details the preparation of the wood and of the gessoduro and contains an appendix on Antonello da Messina; and Ziloty 1941, a compendium of the most important treaties on oil-painting (Vasari, Leonardo, Cennino Cennini, Theophile, etc.), with extracts from Vasari (quoted in Le Condottiere, ff. 133-134). Winckler, like Joni Icilio, reads Cennini's Libro dell'arte as documentary background for his forgeries; like Van Meegeren he spends seven months in voluntary seclusion in order to finish his "Condottiere"; his psychological traits are a mixture of Icilio, Dossena, Van Meegeren and Malksat. Full references are given in the Bibliography under Rudel, Vasari, Cennini, and Leonardo for oil-painting and Isnard, Cole, Coreman, Kilbracken, Werness for famous forgers.

(25) David Bellos compares aspects of Le Condottiere to the sort of writing that Perec could have produced for La Ligne générale projected review (Bellos 1992b, 60). On La Ligne générale, see Burgelin 1992.

(26) Claude Burgelin (op. cit.) argues that the literature of the late 1950s was marked by falsity: false Marxism, pseudo-revolutions and so on. In this sense Perec's choice of forgery as the subject of Le Condottiere may be regarded as another indication of what needed to be overcome in French literature.

(27) Not surprisingly Winckler or Jérôme fake frequently faked artists (Cranach, Corot, Degas, Sisley, Jongkind, etc.) and appropriate titles from a similarly common range of forged art works: "Femme au bain", "Adoration", "Visitation". By accident or by design a few of them seem to be identical to real existing forgeries: the combination of portraits from Memling and Holbein in Le Condottiere (see p. 45 and Fig. 7-10). See also in UCDA Chardin, "Les apprêts du déjeuner" (pp. 21 and 115), Giorgione's "Joueur de flûte" (p. 94), the portrait of a Principessa d' Este by an artist of the School of Pisanello (pp. 77 and 112), "Femme lisant une lettre" by an artist of the Dutch School (pp. 75 and 109) (Fig. 14-21).

Chapter 3

(l) Bernard Magné (1991) gives a description of the preparatory works (FP 61) and talks about "manques et faux programmés" and "manques et faux non-programmés".

(2) See Wse, 193 and the following interviews and talks: BM 1965, 15, the Warwick lecture 1967, PAP, 36, BN 1977, JC 1978, JR 1979, 136, KM 1981, etc.

(3) Ewa Pawlikowska, who first studied this aspect, coined the term of "impli-citation" to signify the "implicitness" of the process (Pawlikowska 1985, 213-31). Magné also distinguishes between "impli-citation simple" (unacknowle ged) and "implicitation complexe" (misattributed) (Magné 1989b, 73-75). In fact the quotations can be said to be implicit only if the term is used in its Latin meaning (from "implicare", interwoven). The use of "unacknowlegded" and "misattributed" is therefore more accurate.

(4) In the "Cahier Allusions et details" (FP 68) used by Perec and reproduced, with some omissions, in typescript in CGPI, the allusions to the "Arnolfini" (Ch. XCVIII), the "Tempest" (Ch. XXIX), "Nature morte" (Ch. LXVIII) and the "Hay Wagon" (Ch. XCIII) are not included. They figure in the cahiers des charges for these chapters (FP 61).

(5) Bernard Magné (1985a) explores the mechanism allowing the transition from detail to text, and draws a diagram of all the possible itineraries. Magné distinguishes between inscriptions at a diegetic level and inscriptions at a meta-diegetic level. The first instance covers the visual details and details coming from Perec's knowledge of the artist or of the painting, which provide descriptive and narrative elements ("iconic" and "verbal generators"). In the second instance the element produces a "discursive embedding", when the transcription leads to a story, or a "representational embedding", when the fragment is inserted in an image. If there are cases in which these categories can be applied, the transition is more complicated and less mechanical than this. Magné's explanation does not take into consideration Perec's intervention in the system of constraints (he does talk about Perec's choices in a later general article (Magné 1991) but has never made a similar remark for the Paintings List), and does not attempt to explain Perec's choice of paintings and of details.

(6) See also the postcard to Catherine Binet (25 November 1981): "Tout Georges que je suis je ne parviens pas à terrasser le Dragon...", quoted in Bellos, GPLW, 701.

(7) On the intertextuality in painting and the use of writing in the visual space of the painting see Butor 1969 and Omar Calabrese 1985, and in particular the chapter on Holbein, pp. 53-77.

(8) Perec mentions an article by Verscharen in the "Cahier Allusions et details" (FP 68) and in the published typescript (CGPI). Full bibliographical references are given in the Bibliography under Chefs-d'oeuvres de l'art, n°118.

(9) Appendix 1 gives the references for all the other quotations from Butor's essay mentioned in the "Cahier Allusions et details". The allusion for ch. LXXXIX being

determined also by the Quotations List it is not mentioned. The rest of the information used by Perec for the "Ambassadors" could also come from the same essay, except the goniometer belonging to Niklaus Kratzer for which Perec writes "Hob 102", possibly Tout l'oeuvre peint d'Holbein le Jeune, 1972, p. 102.

(10) According to Pierre Getzler it was Roger Kléman who showed Baugin's painting to Perec. It is also mentioned in a letter to Jacques Lederer as one the postcards decorating his room (unpublished letter from G. Perec to J. Lederer, ms, Pau, 17 Octobre 1959; taken from a transcription made by David Bellos with the permission of Jacques Lederer).

(11) In the list of books that are in Perec's flat, rue Linné, held at the Association Georges Perec, figure books from series like Hachette and the Flammarion. Full references are given in the Bibliography under Chefs-d'oeuvre de l'art and Tout l'oeuvre peint de. Appendix 1 gives details of the visual and written sources used by Perec.

(12) "Documents spéciaux", mentioned in a paper given at the Cercle Polivanoff (FP 62).

(13) Although Baugin's "Nature morte" seems, for many reasons, an obvious choice, it was Chardin, presumably a still-life, which was first chosen. One of the Paintings Lists, very close to the final version, has at n° 0 "Chardin", then scored out and replaced by Baugin (FP 62,1,19)

(14) Again the initial choice was an "Anatomy lesson", possibly by Rembrandt (FP 62,1,19), a trace of which is left in Vme, p. 63.

(15) Michel Martens, conversation with David Bellos, 11 November 1989.

(16) This aspect is also illustrated in one of Italo Calvino's pre-Oulipian novels, Il Barone Rampante, which is also included in the Quotations List. Calvino's hero sets himself a rule (living exclusively on trees) and sticks to it for the rest of his life. In order to achieve what he set out to do he has to reinvent all the comforts that everyone else take for granted (washing, cooking, etc.).

(17) "The Banker" is, strictly speaking a 3/4 portrait but, in this context, this kind of 3/4 portrait and profile work in like manner.

(18) There is in fact a notion of death implied in the English word "still" (as in "still-born") but the most common acceptation of the term denotes lack of movement and a pause in time.

(19) The following works were consulted on Van Eyck's "Arnolfini": Bénézit; Dhanens 1980; Friedlander 1956, 6-13; Panowsky 1934.

(20) The following works were consulted on Velasquez's "Meninas": Bénézit; Foucault 1966, 19-31; Lafuente Ferrari 1961; Muller 1976.

(21) The following works were consulted on Holbein's "Ambassadors": Bénézit; Tout l'oeuvre peint de Holbein le Jeune, 1972; Butor 1968, 33-41; Calabrese 1985, 53-77; Hervey 1900. On anamorphosis see: Baltrusaitis 1969; Anamorphoses. Jeu de perspective 1976; and Ferrier 1977.

(22) For a long time the two people portrayed in the painting were thought to be Thomas Wyatt* and his friend, the humanist John Leland*. The identity of the two ambassadors has been reestablished by M.F.S. Hervey in 1900 (Hervey 1900, 13).

(23) Omar Calabrese distinguishes nine levels of reading. The four selected are those which are more suitable in this context.

(24) There are also written quotations but these will be discussed in Chapter 4.

(25) The following works were consulted on Carpaccio: Bénézit, Chefs-d'oeuvre de l'art n° 105; Lauts 1962; Serres 1974.

(26) On Brueghel's "Icarus" see Roberts-Jones 1974.

(27) The following works were consulted on Giorgione: Bénézit, Chefs-d'oeuvre de l'art, n° 115; Tout l'oeuvre peint de Giorgione 1971; Gombrich 1989, p. 251.

(28) "Saint Jerome" by Carpaccio, Cranach, Petrus Christus, etc. (Hall's Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols, 168-69). For the "Banker" see Petrus Christus' "Saint Eloy" (Fig. 30).

(29) The following works were consulted on Antonello: Bénézit; Chefs-d'oeuvre de l'art, n° 32; L'Opera completa di Antonello da Messina, 1967 ; Battisti 1985.

(30) The following works were consulted on Metsys: Chefs-d'oeuvre de l'art, n° 118; Tout l'oeuvre peint de Quentin Metsys, which includes an article by Verscharen (quoted in Ch. XLII of Vme); Silvers 1984.

(31) On Bosch's "Hay Wagon" see Bénézit and Combe 1946.

(32) This example has been used by Perec as an illustration of symmetrical stories in an interview with Pierre Lartigue (PL 1978).

(33) The instances of self-inscriptions have been analysed by many Perec scholars (see, for example, Magné 1985, Pawlikowska 1985, Roche 1985, Bellos 1990, etc.).

(34) Perec refers to this technique as Burrough's "cut off" (GC 1978, 72, and FV 1979, Jsn, 87). For an example of this technique see the text "Fragments de désert et de culture" which is constructed on this principle.

(35) The preparatory notes for chapter XCVIII of Vme (FP 111) include four xeroxes

of such a catalogue. The paragraph on page 595 describing the Réols' bedroom is a collage of the catalogue entries from these xeroxes.

(36) Perec mentions Flaubert's notion of "oeuvre d'art conçue comme néant": starting from nothing and arriving at nothing (JB 1978, 37).

(37) This is the title of the first Pop Art exhibition held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, 1961.

(38) Perec's "phobia" of forgetting (FV 1979, Jsn, 87-88) may be seen in texts like the "Inventaire des aliments liquides et solides que j'ai engurgités pendant l'année 1974".

(39) Some of the details of Valène's list are attributed to the wrong person. This aspect will be discussed in Chapter 4 below.

(40) For a less bleak version of London see "Promenades dans Londres", where Perec uses the same elements but seen in a different light.

(41) It may be noted that this quotation as well as the quotation mentioned on p. 137 above (Vme, 463) comes in Calvino's Invisible Cities in the section entitled "La Città e gli occhi", "The City and the Eyes". It may be seen as another indication of the visuality of dreams and memories.

(42) A similar attitude is expressed by Perec in a paper on description delivered at Albi ("A propos de la description", 1981). In this paper Perec talks about space as a "construction of the mind" and about the fact that space only begins to exist when it has been memorised.

Chapter 4

(l) This inventory includes all references to paintings regardless of the fact that some are copies and reproductions on post-cards, biscuit tins, and other iconographical objects.

(2) Michel Butor discusses this aspect at length in Les Mots dans la peinture, 5-28.

(3) For some of these interpretations see Gombrich 1989, 180, Dhanens 1980, 178 and 193, and Panofsky 1934, 124-125.

(4) Michel Butor's essay on the "Ambassadors" (1968) from which some of Perec's allusions are taken (see above p. 81 and Appendix 1, under Holbein) provides an explanation for the insertion of these two books in the painting.

(5) This tradition of literary criticism has continued into the present day. Apollinaire, Butor, Denis Roche and many other contemporary authors wrote literary texts to accompany works of art for illustrated books or exhibition catalogues. Perec himself

has a long history of this kind of writing (see Introduction).

(6) These remarks on Proust are discussed in detail by J.Meyers (1975, 112-22), from which much of the evidence above is taken.

(7) "Trapp" is also an allusion to Nabokov's Lolita since it is the name given to the detective who follows the narrator because he looks like his cousin, Gustave Trapp.

(8) Jean-Yves Pouilloux (1991), speaking about the paintings of UCDA, describes the functioning of the insertion of false paintings by virtue of "indices par vraisemblance", "indices par ressemblance" and "indices par consistance". These could be applied also to Vme.

(9) It was Pierre Getzler that pointed out this joke, which was confirmed by Harry Mathews (1991, p. 291).

(10) The index sometimes provides the solution as to who the artist is or where the quotations are taken from: the entries for Montalescot and Pellerin include dates that correspond to Roussel and Flaubert (see Magné, 1989a). Generally speaking for most of the non-existent artists there is no indication of dates, country, or genre, while for real painters this information is given. However, since this system is not consistent it is impossible to rely completely on the Index.

(11) It may be possible that these paintings exist but they are not to be found at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, which has a large collection of prints and reproductions, nor in the libraries of the Musée d'Arts Décoratifs and of the Ecole des Beaux Arts. It therefore seems unlikely that they do exist.

(12) It may also be an allusion to a film by the Marx Brothers ("A Day at the Races", 1936) but this does not invalidate the first hypothesis.

(13) It is not included in Andrew Wilton's book on Turner (1979) which has a complete catalogue of Turner's works. The Clore Gallery in London which has the greatest documentation on Turner and many of his works, could find no reference to this painting. The insertion of Tintagel may have been determined by a non-programmed allusion to the Graal, hence *Percival* Bartlebooth's attempt to copy it. Or it may be a self-allusion to Perec's stay at Rock in 1954 (Eses, 32), which is indeed a "harbour near Tintagel".

(14) Andrée Chauvin (1990) discusses what she calls "le modèle de la copie alterée" with reference to UCDA, Vme, and "Still life/Style Leaf".

(15) Andrée Chauvin analyses the fascination with miniature (Chauvin 1990, in particular the section entitled "Regard au minuscule", pp. 106-108). Her conclusions are applied mainly to UCDA but are obviously valid also for Vme and most of Perec's works.

(16) "Colle" in French also means a tricky question.

(17) "The art of deception" is the title of a lecture given by David Bellos in 1989 which deals more exhaustively with this aspect (Bellos 1989, published in Manchester Memoirs, 1990).

(18) The information on watercolour comes mainly from 4 manuals: Frapoint, Goupil, Robert Karl and Adrian Hill, although some of the other manuals may also have provided the occasional allusion. A bibliography and full notes on this manuals are in the preparatory notes for Vme (FP 111,48,6v°-54,5r° and 111,85,3,1,3,lr°-6v°d). Full bibliographical references of the works consulted on watercolour are given in the Bibliography under Barnard, Bordier, Charmichael, Frapoint, Goupil, Hardie, Hill, Huisman and Karl.

(19) Italo Calvino in his Memos for the next millennium uses Perec as an example of multiplicity (pp. 117-119). He does not include him in his lecture on "Rapidity", pp. 31-52.

(20) It may be argued that this description refers to Bartlebooth's memory but since he only looked at seascapes in order to paint them, memories, in this case, could be considered as paintings.

(21) Jacques Roubaud 1989, 331-32, and David Bellos 1989 discuss the relevance of Maiandros in Bartlebooth's last puzzle and the transition from "M" to "W". David Bellos (GPLW, 663) also points out that Bartlebooth's last puzzle depicts a non-existent place since Maiandros is to be found in Mythology. He does not, however, mention the different levels of distortion involved in the description of this watercolour.

Chapter 5

(1) The same approach can be seen in "De quelques emplois du verbe habiter" (P/C, 13-16) and, in Eses, in the chapters on the district and the town (pp. 79-88).

(2) In an apology for the game of Go Perec states the superiority of this game to chess (PTG, 39-42) and its relationship to writing: "Il n'existe qu'une seule activité à laquelle on puisse raisonnablement comparer le GO. On l'aura compris, c'est l'écriture". However, through the literary affiliation to Nabokov and the Knight's tour it is also possible to see the relevance of the chess metaphor: first of all in French the same word, pièce, designates the rooms of a house, pieces of jigsaw puzzles, and chessmen; in addition, the game of chess and puzzle-solving are comparable ("[Bartlebooth posait] ses pièces comme un joueur d'échecs construit sa stratégie inéluctable et imparable", Vme, 413); in the last part of the game some of the terminology used for chess seems to suit the battle between Bartlebooth and Winckler: Bartlebooth plays a "blind" game but in the end he finds on the board an "x", the symbol used in chess for "taking", that is to say Winckler takes and Bartlebooth looses the game. In this sense the game between Bartlebooth and Winkler could be considered a "jeu d'échecs", a chess-game and a game of failure.

(3) David Bellos discusses the Nabokov connection in relation to the idea of

fragmentation ("It is not the parts that matter but their combination") and to the sideway lurch of the knight (Bellos, GPLW, 508).

(4) This type of deconstruction can also be seen in Perec's poetry which is based on the deconstruction of names and sequences of letters. Perec's collaboration with artists is mentioned in more detail in the Introduction, pp. 14-16.

(5) Pierre Getzler took an interest in Japanese scrolls because Jacques Roubaud gave him Arthur Waley's translation of the Genji Tales. He remembers talking to Perec about this art form. Perec probably saw the two books Getzler has in his studio (Okudaira and Seckel). It must not be forgotten that the period 1968-70 was period of GO (PTG) and of Japanese culture. Full references for the works consulted on Japanese scroll is given in the Bibliography under Baker, Batterson, Butor, Grilli, Kidder, Okudaira, Seckel.

(6) Examples of this kind of sequential art works may be found also in other civilisations: the roman bas-reliefs and the Italian praedelle, for example portray a series of figures or scenes. Illustrated books such as the Egyptian Book of the Dead, and some editions of the Bible (including the Torah, which is not illustrated because of Jewish opposition to religious portraits) were also done on scroll form. However, the Japanese scrolls are the only art form to combine the scroll layout with a notion of space as continuum, and other considerations on perspective and illusion.

Bibliography

This bibliography is divided in two main sections. The first section (Primary Sources) lists works by Georges Perec in chronological order of publication. References in this thesis are, as far as possible, to published books or collections or articles.

The primary bibliography is divided in the following sub-sections:

(a) Published works

(b) Books in collaboration

(c) Art Books (in collaboration with artists)

(d) Periodicals

(e) Interviews and Talks

(f) Films

(g) Unpublished texts and manuscripts

The second section (Secondary Bibliography) lists all the works mentioned in this thesis. It is divided in the following sub-sections:

(a) Critical works on Georges Perec

(b) Unpublished dissertations

(c) Works consulted on artists, Art History and Art techniques

(d) Other works consulted.

Reference works and exhibition catalogues are given at the head of section c.

The place of publication is Paris, unless otherwise stated.

Section 1: Primary sources

a) Published works

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UHQD Un Homme qui dort. Denoël, Les Lettres nouvelles, 1967. Quoted from Folio n° 2197.

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BO La Boutique Obscure. 124 Rêves. Dënoel, Collection Cause commune, 1973.

Eses Espèces d'espaces. Galilée, 1974.

VCMA Les Verts Champs de moutarde de l'Afghanistan. Translation of Harry Mathews, Tlooth. Dënoel, Lettres Nouvelles, 1974.

Wse W ou le souvenir d'enfance. Dënoel, Les Lettres nouvelles, 1975

Jms Je me souviens. Les Choses communes, I. Hachette, Collection POL, 1978.

Vme La Vie mode d'emploi. Hachette, Coll. POL, 1978. Quoted from Livre de poche n° 5341.

UCDA Un Cabinet d'amateur. Histoire d'un tableau. Balland, Collection l'Instant romanesque, 1979.

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53J 53 Jours. Harry Mathews and Jacques Roubaud (ed.), POL, 1989.

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Jsn Je suis né. Seuil, Librairie du XXe siecle, 1990 .
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REI (with Robert Bober)
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